

**Choreographing and Reinventing Chinese Diasporic Identities –  
an East-West Collaboration**

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## Abstract

In demonstrating Eastern- and Western-based Chinese diasporic dances as equally critical and question-provoking in Chinese identity reconstructions, this research compares choreographic implications in the Hong Kong-Taiwan and Toronto-Vancouver dance milieus of recent decades (1990s – 2010s). An auto-ethnographic study of Yuri Ng's (Hong Kong) and Lin Hwai-min's (Taiwan) works versus my own (Toronto) and Wen Wei Wang's (Vancouver), it probes identities choreographed in place-constituted "third spaces" between Chinese selves and Euro-American Others. I suggest that these identities perpetrate hybrid movements and aesthetics of geo-cultural-political distinctness from the Chinese ancestral land – ones manifesting ultimate "glocalization" intersecting global political economies and local cultural-creative experiences. Echoing the diasporic habitats' cultural and socio-historical specificities, they are constantly (re) appropriated and reinvented via translation, interpretation, negotiation, and integration of East-West cultural-artistic and socio-political ingredients. The event unfolds such identities' "placial" uniqueness that indicates the same Chinese *roots* yet divergent diasporic *routes*. In reviewing Ng's balletic and contemporary photo-choreographic productions of post-British colonial Hong Kong-ness alongside Lin's repertoires of Chinese traditional, Taiwan indigenous, American modern and Other artistic impacts noting Taiwanese-ness, the study unearths cultural *roots* as the core source of Chinese identity rebuilding from East Asian displacements. It traces an "ingrained" third space between Chinese historic-social values, Western cultural elements, and Other performing artistries of Hong Kong and Taiwanese "belongings." Juxtaposing my Chinese traditional-based and transcultural Toronto dance projects with Wang's Vancouver balletic-contemporary fusions of Chinese iconicity, Chinese-Canadian identities marked by a

“hyphenated” (third/in-between) space are associated as varying North American self-generated *routes* of social and artistic possibilities in a Canadian mosaic-cosmopolitical setting – the persistent state of Canadian “becoming.” My conclusion resolves the examined choreographic cases as continually developed through third-space instigated East-West cultural-political crossings plus interpenetrative local creativities and global receptivity. Of gains or losses, struggles or rebirths, the cases of placial-temporal significations elicit multiple questions on Chinese diasporic cultural infusions, social sustenance, artistic integrity, and identity representations amid East-West negotiations – my experiential reflection on the “dance” role and potency in the reimagining and remaking of Chinese diasporic identities.

To my parents, Ursula M. C. and Francis C. C. Quah,  
and  
my sister Cecilia

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
 Chapter 1: Introduction: Between Dance, Places, and Identities .....	 1
 Chapter 2: Choreographing and Reinventing Chinese Diasporic <i>Roots</i> – a Hong Kong-Taiwan Case Study.....	  25
Part I.....	31
Part II.....	45
 Chapter 3: Choreographing and Reinventing Chinese Diasporic <i>Routes</i> – a Toronto-Vancouver Case Study.....	  91
Part I.....	99
Part II.....	125
 Chapter 4: Epilogue: The Next Steps, the Final Questions.....	 153
 Bibliography.....	 171
 Figures (1-11).....	 185

## List of Figures

Fig. 1 – *Firecracker*, The Hong Kong Ballet Company

Fig. 2-A – *still dancing*: Victor Ma/Kam Tin Clinic, Yuen Long, New Territories

B – *still dancing*: Helen Lai/Lomond Road Garden Pathway, Kowloon

C – *still dancing*: Mui Cheuk-yin/Lok Hau Fook Restaurant, Kowloon City

D – *still dancing*: Yeung Wai-mei/City Hall Memorial Garden, Hong Kong

E – *still dancing*: Lau Siu-ming/Tin Hau Temple, Happy Valley, Hong Kong

Fig. 3 – *Legacy*, The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan

Fig. 4 – *Nine Songs*, The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan

Fig. 5 – *Cursive II (Pine Smoke)*, The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan

Fig. 6 – *Apart yet Together*: Mi-young Kim, Lata Pada, Ruo-chun Nie, Elena Quah

Fig. 7 – *Behind Silk Ribbons & Rebozos*: Norma Araiza, Elena Quah

Fig. 8 – *Ending an Arabic Fable*, Elena Quah

Fig. 9 – *In Transition/Under the Skin*: Wen Wei Dance, Beijing Modern Dance Company

Fig. 10 – *Unbound*, Wen Wei Dance

Fig. 11 – *Cockpit*, Wen Wei Dance

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Between Dance, Places, and Identities

“What’s your thought on the future of Chinese dance artists in Canada?”  
... Spotlight on my sweat-tinted body in a traditional Chinese dance costume ...  
... An intrigued silence awaits from the dim, seemingly vast audience seating ...  
(Winchester Street Theatre, 3/16/2003)

When I was asked that question during a post-performance “Question-&-Answer” session at a Toronto dance venue years ago, my mind was struck by a momentary blankness. As a Chinese-Canadian dance artist of Hong Kong origin, I felt that the question called for an examination of not only Chinese geopolitical histories, but also of Canadian socio-cultural factors shaping current and future dances of “Chinese-ness.” The inquiry implied as much a riveting vision of Chinese dance developments as it did of Western dance texts composed anew with Chinese cultural values and social elements. It certainly was not a topic that could be addressed within minutes.

I have since realized that the audience member’s question, though likely a thought of personal curiosity, is loaded with the causes and effects of Chinese-conscious dance creations and viewing interpretations in diasporas. I perceive it as an interesting concern of more than just Canadian, but one critically relevant in diasporic East Asian spaces. The propagation of Chinese dance<sup>1</sup> and Chinese-inspired dance works in different diasporic cultural and socio-political

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<sup>1</sup> There are two major Chinese dance traditions originating from China: Chinese nationality dance and Chinese classical dance. The former, composed of 56 Chinese dance forms, is derived from the lifestyles and spiritual values of the mainstream Han and other ethnic (e.g. Chau Sien, Dai, Hui, Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan, Uygur) cultures; the latter, developed as a unitary Chinese stylistic category, integrates Chinese court dance expressions, Chinese operatic movements, Chinese martial arts, and Russian balletic techniques. Both traditions represent the national character and spirit of China, and are professionally trained/performed



climates, be it on Eastern or Western grounds, constitutes both similar and disparate creative conditions and artistic outcomes.

The note of “future” in this scenario signifies multi-layered questions and associated meanings. How are creative actions or onstage performances represented by Chinese choreographers, and interpreted through the senses of viewers and spectators in contemporary diasporic settings? Are the choreographers’ works culturally responsible, or culturally and politically responsive products? What are the social and intercultural impacts on Chinese-conscious dance creations on diasporic lands? What are the creative strategies and artistic goals of Chinese diasporic dancers-choreographers working between cultural integrity and global reception? I think of the interrogated “future” as imbedded in these Eastern and Western socio-historical and cultural-artistic interactions – constructed upon continuous dance expressions of the many “selves” and patented experiences that are not exclusively Canadian or Western diasporic.

The audience member’s inquiry motivates my present research endeavour in examining Chinese identities choreographed and danced in the diasporic milieus of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Toronto and Vancouver. I propose that these identities render a special character and aesthetic quality to the dance styles and vocabularies delivered, and often incite the conscious and/or subconscious creative impetuses. They are constantly reimagined, reinvented, (re) appropriated, and negotiated in response to socio-cultural particularities and geopolitical shifts. Sustaining the artistic and inherent remodelling of diasporic “acculturation,”<sup>2</sup> these identities reflect an

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along a distinct system of Chinese bodily aesthetics, rhythms, stylized steps, and facial gestures (Feng 2002, 208, 216; Chen, K. 1992, 7; Chen, F.M. 1992, 4-5)

<sup>2</sup> Ethnologist Gertrude Kurath’s definition of a diasporic dynamic process that merges different cultural traditions and artistic sources in the event of dance migrations, resulting in a creative remoulding of the original dance materials denoting the socio-cultural and geopolitical values of the New Land (1960, 240).

individual Chinese-ness of culturally diverse and hybridized fabrications stemming beyond Chinese ancestral soil.

Chinese identity transformations can be observed through movements of distinct diasporic cultural-artistic aesthetics and social meanings, mobilized by a deep and direct linkage between dance, cultures, and localities. In reviewing how dance first engaged with different social, historical, political and economic contexts to produce knowledge and meanings from the late 1980s to the 2000s, cultural historian and performance theorist Janet O'Shea examines dance studies as an interdisciplinary field – an approach that interconnects the dancing body with individual or group identities based on cultural and political concerns. She regards the field as significant crossings of history, ethnography, cultural studies and choreographic analyses, and a part of the conscious, politically defined attempts in creating identities and studying representations (2010, 5). Similarly, historian and dance critic Gay Morris elaborates that cultural studies connect dance to broader social and political issues through a critical awareness of historical contingency, and suggests that dance as an interdisciplinary project essentially means “moving outward into the world and its concerns” (2009, 92-94). These scholarly analyses of interrelating the artistic, cultural, socio-historical and political provide a perspective on changing Chinese identities at diasporic dance making. The bird's-eye view marks an ongoing and evolving ethno-cultural identification process in my research sites under simultaneous Eastern and Western social and political constructs.

My examination of Chinese identities reinvented in diasporic dance situations of diverse cultural interflows and artistic syntheses is first ignited by historian and ethnographic theorist James Clifford's insight of socially displaced or relocated identities. Clifford indicates that identities emerging through transcendent displacements of artistic or scientific authenticity

are “historically contingent or subject to local re-appropriation,” and thus “always mixed, relational and inventive” (1988, 10). In conceding that the social and artistic identities of my research undergo a similar diasporic process, I underscore that they reflect an intense experience of placial social values and cultural dynamics. The term “placial” was initially adopted from philosopher Edward Casey’s suggestion in rethinking local knowledge “appropriate to the peculiarities of ‘places’ [.....] their felt properties and cultural specificities” (1996, 45). I perceive such identities of Chinese descent as reconfigured by the distinct cultural properties and governing ideologies of their inhabited areas, and locally (re) appropriated through centuries of historic-political and social interactions with mixed colonial, native/indigenous, and migrated cultures. Under these circumstances, the Hong Kong-, Taiwan-, Toronto- and Vancouver-based choreographies selected for investigation elucidate unique “placial/place-evolved”<sup>3</sup> identities of Chinese-ness with a mix of Other faded and co-existing cultures.

I deem the identities examined as socio-historically relevant to historical-cultural theorist Homi Bhabha’s concept of “The Third Space”<sup>4</sup> or cultural in between-ness (2004, 55-56). A social attribute of cultural relocation and identity shifts, it is a special space where “the cutting edge of translation and negotiation” occurs in diasporas (ibid, 56; Katrak 2011, 2-3). I observe from the scholarly depiction a transmuting median located between (different) cultures – where the translation or interpretation of the original cultural materials, and the negotiation of retaining

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<sup>3</sup> In her research, performance scholar Shakina Nayfack adopts Edward Casey’s theoretical term “placial” to reflect the place-invoked transformation of imported post-WW II Butoh rituals as a healing communal practice in a forgotten Mexican mine site (Tlalpujahua) of colonial infiltrations, identity crisis, and touristic aftermaths (2009, 164). Inspired by this same term, I suggest the Chinese diasporic identities and dance bodies in my study as uniquely re-appropriated by local/placial cultural properties and geopolitical conditions under global developmental impacts.

<sup>4</sup> In this research, I expand and elaborate on The Third Space/cultural in-between-ness as a triple layered phenomenon during Chinese diasporic dance making and identity revelations: a visible space inserted between cultures, a creative space connecting between ancestral *roots* and diasporic *routes*, and a latent space existing between global political-economic forces and local socio-cultural constructions.

or forfeiting certain aspects of the materials take place during artistic, socio-economic and political collaborations. In my choreographic analysis, I consider the third space a seemingly vulnerable yet fluidly constructive arena in the reframing of Chinese diasporic identities. It typifies an intermediary ground for choreographic translation or interpretation of Chinese placial histories and social traditions, and the artistic negotiation of various disciplinary and cultural aesthetics for the understanding and receptivity of different/Other cultures. The process enables stellar connections between Chinese ancestral knowledge, Chinese diasporic consciousness and dance engenderment. Choreographically embraced as a state of creative and rewritable openness, the third space inaugurates, via intercultural exchanges and artistic convergences, constantly reshaped and reinvented Chinese identities between two (or more) cultures in accord with diasporic cultural values and social changes. The eventful occurrences deepen my grasp of these identities as third-space products of mixed cultural and socio-political structures at geo-specific dance creations. As changed or changing Chinese-ness cultivated independently from the Chinese ancestral nation, they impart a pervasive sense of placial and cultural-artistic individualities in my research locations.

The third space spurs my perspective of an ethnographic agent operating between one's cultural *roots* and his/her *routes* of tracing the self of a typical place and time. It formulates an evident "*roots-routes* binary" during Chinese diasporic dance making and identity reconstructions. Contemplating on cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall's observation of cultural identities as "unstable points of identification or suture" (2003, 237) subjected to continuous historical, cultural and socio-political plays, I observe *roots* as the intrinsic base of identity shifts and transformations at points of historic-political instigations and diasporic social adaptations. When social historian Paul Gilroy conceives identities as *routes* or "the changing

same” (1993, xi) in coming to terms with surrounding social and cultural-political factors, I discern the active engagement of (the same) *roots* in negotiating diverging *routes* of rediscovering and remoulding the selves during geographic and cultural relocations. It is my belief that, the “danced” third space, in intersecting old/rooted substances and new diaspora-routed ingredients of sundry cultures, is critically instrumental to Chinese diasporic identity transitions and (re) developments.

As reviewed in subsequent chapters, people leaving the Chinese ancestral land for permanent settlements in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Toronto and Vancouver have developed, upon their Chinese *roots* and along their centuries-old migration *routes*, alternative forms of Chinese identifications known respectively as Hong Kongese (Lau 1988, 2), Taiwanese, and Chinese-Canadians. On these accounts, I am especially compelled by Gilroy’s metaphoric iteration of identities as *routes*. I associate his concept with the trails of dance artists that reinstate or retrieve socio-cultural values and self validations while claiming or seeking their Eastern (Hong Kong and Taiwan) or Western (Toronto and Vancouver) diasporic positions and dance representations. The scenario induces my perception of these identities as reinvented away from the Chinese ancestral land, and choreographically embodying a third space located between inherent Chinese *roots* and transformative diasporic *routes* of social and geopolitical readjustments. Striving or thriving in this vibrant space, they manifest the Chinese selves preoccupied in continuous dance sojourns of self-rebuilding via sensible and meaningful rapports with natives, migrants, and all Others on second/adopted home grounds.

From a worldview standpoint, the identities as danced or choreographed are persistently affected and sculpted by a larger, influential third space existing between global ethno political-economic drives and local socio-cultural compositions. Socio-cultural anthropologist Arjun

Appadurai's idea of "ethnoscape,"<sup>5</sup> one of five leading forces of globalization, inspires my perception of the identities' cosmopolitan attributions. Indeed, increasing waves of global ethnic migrations to urban sites of the adoptive countries for living or occupational advancements create ongoing local cosmopolitan constructs in the migrant-destined places/cities. In the places of my study, Chinese global migrations are integral to local cosmopolitan pluralism. The ethnoscape phenomenon instigates a sophisticated "micro manifestation of the global" (Appadurai 1996, 39) – one installed by both Chinese and Other cultures from around the world. This global-local forging of cosmopolitan centres where citizens of different ethnic, cultural and/or religious backgrounds live and interact, in my opinion, exerts core and major influences over such places' discrete streams of Chinese diasporic dance expressions and intermixed identities.

Affirming the diasporic sites of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Toronto and Vancouver as fundamentally cosmopolitan, I note that choreographies produced therein demonstrate a placial uniqueness built from a third space operating between global-wide cultural-economic movements and local socio-political structuring. The event permits, on one side, the linkage to the "locally rooted" (native or migrated) Chinese and Other heritages, and on the other, a "globally routed" Chinese connection with a different yet "shared" set of socio-cultural and political practices in Eastern and Western cosmopolitan diasporas. Incorporating poly cultural and diverse elements in living proximity as creative sources and aesthetics, the dance creations of Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and Chinese-Canadian contexts manifest a series of placial identities

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<sup>5</sup> Arjun Appadurai's terminological reference of "peoples moving across the continents" for social stabilities and economic advancements. Ethnoscape, together with technoscape, mediascape, financescape, and ideoscape are the five "scapes" that Appadurai defines as "different streams or flows along which cultural material may be moving across national boundaries" while impacting local cultural lifestyles, social economies and politics as persistent global forces. (Appadurai 1991, 297-300; 1996, 33.)

arising far beyond a pure, essentialist Chinese culture. As exemplified by the choreographies of my research, the embodied third space transverses cultural in-between-ness to indicate global-local processed cosmopolitan (cultural-artistic) intersected-ness. For the choreographers concerned, it is a fecund midpoint where the (re) creation of “more” and “varied” Chinese identities translates into an artistic articulation of their inhabited social milieus and relative diasporic experiences.

By the same token, these identities are symptomatic of sociologist and theorist Roland Robertson’s articulation of “glocalization.”<sup>6</sup> His view of the simultaneity of “the global in the local” and “the local in the global” (1995, 32) – my interpretive reflection as “the global linking with the local, and the local constituting the global,” suggests a latent third space operating between global political economies and local socio-cultural infrastructures. I visualize from the process a pragmatic intersection in which global artistries, goods and services link with local productive and consumer traditions, and local cultural inventiveness constitutes global productivities and dissemination strategies. Given diasporic cosmopolitan topographies, the identities under discussion reflect active choreographic enactments of glocalizing features. As social beings sustaining global impacts and local/placial affects, they concoct the linking of global views and practices with local social patterns and creative efforts, and the catering of local cultural experiences to global artistic-political trends. In this manner, they are always striving in the third space of global and local in-between-ness – the pivot that procures translation and

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<sup>6</sup> Roland Robertson’s elaboration of contemporary globalization as “glocalization” – a consistent phenomenon of intersecting and interpenetrating global political-economic flows and local socio-cultural instigations in the development of world-oriented social economies. According to *The Oxford Dictionary of New Words*, the terms “glocal” and “glocalization” are “formed by telescoping *global* and *local* to make a blend” (1997, 134). The idea is originated from/modelled after the Japanese agricultural principle of adapting one’s farming techniques to local conditions, while managing a global outlook adapted to local conditions in catering Japanese business for global localization. The terms “glocal” and “glocalization” represented aspects of business jargon in the 1980s, and became a major marketing buzzword of the early 90s. (See Robertson 1995, 28-29.)

negotiation of global indicators and local materials for cosmopolitan reception. Invariably preoccupied with this transparent in-between space in connecting and converging global demands and local ingredients for social and artistic mobility, these identities exist as what I term “cultural symptoms” of glocalization. In my dance discourse, they present the living states choreographed to the ever changing “glocal” (see Footnote 6) flows and constituents of intercultural cosmopolitan exigencies.

The third-space identity and relevant theories as elaborated ground my research inquiry of representative Hong Kong, Taiwan, Toronto and Vancouver choreographies. I regard Chinese identities imparted in these works as placial expressivities and creative nucleuses of diaspora denotations. In this light, the embodied identities processed between (Chinese) *roots* and (diasporic) *routes*, and in the midst of global and local forces, transmit East-West orchestrated social histories, distinct cultural knowledge, and movement aesthetics developed through place-specific political administrations and social conditions. I argue that the works are practically identity-primed products of the third space, where diasporic features of cultural in-between-ness and socio-political differences foster intra and intercultural translation, interpretation, negotiation and (re) appropriation in their places of origin. I suggest that choreographic productions in these places particularize “a creative space” between the Chinese selves and diasporic Others, generating “new,” “hybrid” and “Other” Chinese identities of place-relevant cultures and geopolitics. The phenomenon implicates identity and aesthetic transformations in the pith of cultural diversity and artistic multiplicity, constituting movement styles, music components, cultural props, artistic symbols, and corporeal theatricalities of uniquely reinvented placial identities of the same Chinese roots, and nonetheless, of differing socio-historical and divergent dance routes.



## **The Dancing Self and Artistic Nexus**

In my dual stance as a Hong Kong migrant and a Toronto dance artist-researcher, I have lived and expressed both repertory and literary embodiments of my “rooted” Chinese and “mixed” Chinese-Canadian identities. Connected to the shared experience of a migrated self, I am intrigued by how some of my choreographic predecessors and counterparts in various places and eras engage their Chinese heritage and redeployed Chinese-ness in dance. My works developed with a spontaneously changing cultural identity (from Chinese to Chinese-Canadian) have inspired an experiential study of these choreographers’ transforming Chinese identities in a third space between cultures – the post-migration statures that emanate from their distinctive diasporic dance signatures. The auto-ethnographic approach predicates “interdependency” between my researching self and the researched choreographers, where I can see part of them in me, or include part of their histories in my story. In due course, my application of self-reflexivity may offer credible and enlivened perspectives that complement this research.

As a dancer-choreographer of the same Chinese ancestry with a common diasporic history, I maintain an insider view when discussing the choreographers under study, yet an outsider stance in examining their disparate diasporic communities and varied place-constituted dance works. The process of using “self” to learn about the others through cultural senses and bodily movements leads to frequent crossings between the insider-outsider boundaries, or the blurring of the self-other(s).<sup>7</sup> Posited between my “researcher” self and the “researched” others of Chinese descent from different geographic and artistic domains, I recognize my fluid intervention in moving between the inside and outside, “creating a ground that belongs to no

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<sup>7</sup> In this research writing, the word “other(s)” is in lower case when applied to other people of the same culture, or other people in general/without any cultural specification. When used to signify cultures of “different” origins, and “Chinese-ness” developed in different social-political settings outside of the Chinese ancestral nation, I tend to capitalize the first letter of the word – as in “Other(s).”

one” – speaking in relation to, and not for, the studied (Trinh 1997, 418). This note of filmmaker-theorist Trinh Minh-ha on the ethnographic reflexivity of post-colonial identity cinematic representations is precisely how I interpret and insert myself as the research writer-dance participant. I concur that studying through self-experience, or “bending back on self” (ibid) in understanding others of the same cultural genealogy, helps develop the inner vision and touchstone of the insider to gain an outside, all-round perspective of the researched from a distance.

### **Chinese and Yonder: Diasporic Dance Realms of East-West Infusions**

My insider-outsider consciousness permits an intimate yet impartial consideration of the choreographic works under review as the rhetoric of dispersed Chinese identities and pertinent creative forces. Focussing on the recent three decades (1990s – 2010s) and inserting my own choreographic experience in Toronto, I probe the diasporic dance initiatives and expressions of Chinese choreographers whose major works divulge distinct place-spawned cultural and socio-political properties as above mentioned. Featured artists in my study include Yuri Ng – former dancer with The National Ballet of Canada, and presently Artistic Director of The Hong Kong Ballet Group and multi-disciplinary choreographer based in Hong Kong; Lin Hwai-min – Founder-Artistic Director of The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre based in Taiwan; and Wen Wei Wang – Founder-Artistic Director of Wen Wei Dance based in Vancouver. In juxtaposing Ng’s choreographies in Hong Kong with Lin’s in Taiwan, and also my dance creations in Toronto with Wang’s in Vancouver, the study presents an East-West infused circuit of choreographing and re-articulating differing Chinese diasporic identities shaped by placial-historical, geo-cultural and political events.

The research cases elicit my view of new or alternative dance approaches inspired by diaspora-oriented Chinese lineage and cultural habitats – markedly the one-of-a-kind choreographic unions of the Chinese selves and multiple Others (see Footnote 7) living in particular place-time zones. In recognizing Chinese ancestral traditions and social ideology as choreographic primers, I compare the individual cases’ evolved/evolving dance vocabularies and aesthetics that filter both personal feelings and diasporic meanings of socio-cultural and artistic-political impacts. The choreographic choices and outcomes, for that reason, are no longer solely about Chinese or Chinese descendants on adopted home terrains, but Chinese connections and assimilations with many Other cultures and artistic possibilities in the immediate diasporic environments. Hong Kong’s British colonial past, Taiwan’s Japanese colonial episode and American economic-artistic permeations, together with the Toronto and Vancouver cultural mosaics all play significant roles in the forging of such East-West cultural and creative confluences.

As traced through various choreographic examples in the following chapters, the major discourse leans toward cultural-artistic mutability rather than the mere term of hybridity. It is about Ng’s transformation of *The Nutcracker*’s Western ballet aesthetics to re-create a traditional (Hong Kong) Chinese New Year story named *Firecracker*, or Lin’s Taiwanese drama of using American avant-garde composer John Cage’s music to conduct a bodily carving of the Taoist yin-yang energy and its cursive aesthetics. It is also about my Torontonians spin of the long, winding Chinese dance ribbon off its traditional role of Chinese celebrations to suggest a tightly wrapped and suffocating cocoon around a modern migrated identity, or Wang’s Vancouver portrayal of his native (mainland) Chinese experiences through Western contemporary bodies dancing on extinct Chinese foot-binding shoes, to mention an essential few. These fluid

expressions illustrate the intersecting shades of Eastern and Western geo-cultural and artistic bridging, and the open and unprecedented choreographic paths of delivering socio-humanistic perceptions in the relevant diasporas.

### **Behind Movements: A Dialogic Performance of the Choreographed and Theorized**

My auto-ethnographic status as a Chinese diasporic dancer-choreographer facilitates a dialogic link between the choreographic self and others (of the same Chinese lineage but of geographic and disciplinary differences). In mounting a dialogue with these other Chinese choreographers of my research, I am able to generate comparative praxes and interflows of creative initiatives that distinguish our variant diasporic Chinese-ness spanning the East and West.

However, the artistic dialogue is not confined to just between “me” and “them.” It is practically a dialogue between the choreographic works and scholarly theories on diasporic identity hybridization, socio-historical (re) moulding, and pertinent cultural-artistic transformation. In applying the identity and sociological notions of Bhabha, Clifford, Hall, Gilroy, Appadurai, and Robertson, I present the research cases as visual-theatrical iterations of Chinese identities transforming through diasporic shaping and socio-political encounters. I acknowledge that these identities are consistently “embodied and performed” in transmitting the “knowledge” of histories, social memories, communal values, and cultural meanings (Taylor 2003, 21). Connecting the idea of a new or specific self-identification created by the geo-historicity and sociality of “Place” (Ma 2003, 10) with the concept of “bodily habitus” (Bourdieu 1993, 86), I see the examined choreographies as an intuitive habitus of placial particularities and corporeal behaviours in concert with social forces. Along this line, I note the works as primarily “conditioned” by place-based traditional and socio-cultural systems, yet flexibly adjusted to

continuously changing external orders. My dance discourse also strikes a chord with speech theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's "heteroglossia" (1981, 263; Katrak 2011, 14) – the multiple and intersecting verbal-textual meanings acquired from diverse locales in forming a new or distinct regional language, as artistically modelled by each specific and hybrid case of my study. The cross-reflections between choreographies and theories confirm the dialogic tie between dance inventiveness and social relevancies, whereby the choreographed movements illustrate my theoretical observations, and the theoretical notions discussed illuminate the impetuses behind the choreographed texts.

Creating a dialogue between the choreographic cases and existing cultural, socio-historical, and ethnographic theories calls for diversified methodological tools. Engaging "choreographic study"<sup>8</sup> as a central methodology, I collect cogent data from observing live and videotaped performances, pre/post-performance information sessions/workshops, media and production interviews, the artists' biographic blogs and choreographic notes, my personal dance diary, international dance reviews and critiques, plus audience feedbacks. I also draw from archival materials and internet resources in analyzing the selected repertoires for discourse. The research involves extensive viewings and transcriptions of filmed and photographic documentaries from audio-visual collections of local and external sources. In accessing and evaluating relevant choreographic and cultural information, I planned field trips to local organizations and overseas institutions including Dance Ontario and DanceWorks in Toronto, The Chinese Cultural Association of Metropolitan Toronto, the Robarts (Cheng Yu-tung East Asian) Library at the University of Toronto, Vancouver Central Library, Jean M. Wong School of Ballet in Hong

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<sup>8</sup> I engage critical examination of the featured artists' choreographic works in articulating Chinese diasporic identity reconstructions and relevant historical, socio-cultural and geopolitical attributes.

Kong, Beijing Dance Academy and Central University of Nationalities in China, Taipei National University of the Arts and The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre in Taiwan.

## **The Chapters**

In discussing my themes and scholarly findings, I organize my research into four chapters. As this chapter/**Chapter 1** introduces my dance research framed by major social, ethnographic, and cultural and performance theories, the other chapters examine common or disparate dance questions on Chinese diasporic identities including placial delineations, cultural agencies, and choreographic strategies. In presenting the lived diasporas as socio-historically and geopolitically constructed spheres of East-West cultural blending and artistic integration, the chapters foreground the third space as a vital in-between-ness connecting (cultural) *roots* and (creative) *routes* – a diasporic process of Chinese identity reinvention and hybridization. On this matter, Otherness inspiring socio-historical awareness and new dance visions is assessed as a spontaneous and constructive device in choreographing Chinese diasporic identities. A critical survey of four choreographic cases and respective dance artists of Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland Chinese, and Chinese-Canadian backgrounds indicate the diaspora praxes directly or indirectly affected by the socio-ideological character of the Chinese ancestral nation. It follows each artist's dance specialties and their choreographic endeavours along a common work trail of acculturation in diasporas, and establishes the artists' works as Chinese diasporic dance products of epochal and placial-social significations. It also denotes new and self-ploughed dance directions of the individual cases – the artistic actions free from traditional constraints or conventionality, and the diverse cultural collaborations and aesthetics developed between the ancestral past and diasporic present.

**Chapter 2** focuses on the East Asian diasporic experiences of Hong Kong and Taiwan

through the dance creations of Ng and Lin. Under the limelight of merging global dance artistries with local creative materials, it unearths *cultural roots* as the core inspirational source that nourishes displaced or relocated Chinese identities and relative socio-artistic engagements. Geopolitically and administratively separated from the Chinese ancestral nation, their works project an entrenched Chinese heritage yet definitive Hong Kong and Taiwanese “belongings.” The study presents signature works of Ng (*Ordette’s Ordeal*, 1992; *still dancing*, 2007; *Firecracker*, 2010) alongside Lin’s classic repertoires tailored for The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (*Legacy*, 1978; *Nine Songs*, 1993; *Cursive II*, 2004). I read these choreographies as vivid depictions of the Chinese historical traditions and placial authenticities of Hong Kong and Taiwan. From concrete Chinese disciplinary gestures and British colonial images in the Western balletic frame of *Firecracker*, to abstract embodiments of Chinese and Japanese-based Taoist-Zen energies enhanced by John Cage’s compositions in *Cursive II*, for instance, Hong Kong’s and Taiwan’s placial voices of mixed Asian and Euro-American influences proliferate across the East Asian diasporic dance stage.

Onstage, the voices coming through between colonial and post-colonial ambiances, between Hong Kong (or Taiwan) and Other/Western cultures, and between Chinese and Other/Western philosophies, movements and art forms, exemplify third-space expressions in the Chinese diasporas. They signify an intermixture of East-West cultural and artistic elements with the local social histories of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Projected between the ancestral self and the historic-current Others, these voices denote constant choreographic reinstatements of rooted Chinese-ness and diaspora-acquired values in merging Western and global techniques with Eastern and locally sustained dance aesthetics. To that effect, I analyze the works of Ng and Lin as artistic (re) interpretation, (re) appropriation, and negotiation produced in the socio-psychical realm of

the third space – where “selfness” and “Otherness” join forces in constructing the Chinese diasporic dance languages-genres of Hong Kong and Taiwanese uniqueness. Under critical reflections, the choreographic cases unfold rooted Hong Kong-ness and Taiwanese-ness as representations of a Chinese lineage intrinsic to local diasporic consciousness.

**Chapter 3** centres on specific Western/North American diasporic experiences of Toronto and Vancouver through delving into my own and Wang’s choreographic impetuses as Chinese-Canadian dance artists. Our migrant backgrounds invite a diasporic elaboration of the hyphenated space between Chinese and Canadian. I explore the “hyphen” as the “third/in-between” space that links to chances, other choices and Other cultures – *the route* to cultivating choreographies of Chinese-ness specific to Canadian socio-cultural diversity, and with a changing identity of dual or multiple forms in a state of “becoming” (Leeds-Hurwitz c2006, 116; Sarup 1996, 57). In the thick of global ethno-cultural fluxes and local creative calls, I reflect on this hyphenated in-between-ness through discussing my traditionally based Toronto dance creations (*Apart yet Together*, 1998; *Behind Silk Ribbons & Rebozos*, 2002; *Ending an Arabic Fable*, 2008) versus Wang’s contemporary Vancouver dance fusions (*Unbound*, 2006; *Cockpit*, 2009; *In Transition/Under the Skin*, 2012). I observe that these works produced in Canadian multicultural centres practically express Chinese diasporic identities within Canadian construction. The conjoining of Chinese traditions and Canadian social characteristics display cultural hybridization and artistic integration as focal diasporic *routes*. These *routes*, as I experience, are critical in reimagining and rebuilding the Chinese self among Canadian and Other cultures.

The choreographies, though of similar geographic and thematic contexts, reflect divergent artistic responses toward the hyphenated/in-between identity of Chinese-Canadian. I examine



such responses as ones addressing varying placial, temporal, and cosmopolitical aspects in Toronto and Vancouver – a succession of creative actions propelled by third-space dance dynamics between Canadian cosmopolitan cultures. Quoting from my Toronto production of *Behind Silk Ribbons & Rebozos*<sup>9</sup> informing a pathway of cultural interactions and harmony to blended Chinese er-hu (violin) and Spanish-Mexican guitar melodies, and Wang’s Vancouver production of *In Transition/Under the Skin* relaying the socio-mental change of a Chinese migrant of Western contemporary-balletic influences and identity struggles between here (Canada) and there (China), the same hyphenated/in-between space inspires dance expressions of apparently different messages and feelings. The two examples, echoing all other pieces reviewed in this chapter, convey the individual migrated selves and their physical-emotional links with the Chinese ancestral and diasporic lands. These works reflect Chinese-Canadian identities-in-progress along distinct Canadian *routes* of reinventing Chinese cultural and aesthetic values. The process predominated with translation, interpretation and negotiation fosters Chinese-and-Canadian artistic convergence and intercultural connected-ness – in a diverse Canadian-Other atmosphere that is both propitious and dilemma-prone.

Presented as an epilogue, **Chapter 4** reaffirms my choreographic case studies as revelations of third-space socio-cultural and geopolitical instigations. Touching upon the case-specific artists’ latest works, I contemplate on their current artistic mandates as I recall my earliest impressions about each – including a coming-of-age self ready for a dance exploration. The discourse comparing the Chinese diasporic streams of Eastern (Hong Kong-Taiwan) and Western (Toronto-Vancouver) dance engagements, and the artists and actions involved in them, corroborates my analysis of a common dance phenomenon occurring outside the Chinese ancestral land, between diverse cultures, and beyond socio-artistic boundaries and archetypes in

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<sup>9</sup> The Spanish word for “shawls” commonly used in Central America.

a third space. It emphasizes the performed efforts in continuing the dance steps and explorations with the same Chinese and Other cultures, and through Other art disciplines – in identifying the new or Other/alternate “selves.” In this realm, the manifestations of Hong Kong and Taiwan belongingness as exemplified through the Ng-Lin dances, and of Canadian becoming in Wang’s and my Chinese-sourced dance endeavours, reiterate the productive tie between Chinese *roots* and creative diasporic *routes* under inevitable interactive or interpenetrative global impacts and local developments. I observe that such events implicate the ultimate third-space processing of cultural (identity) and global-local (artistic-political) in-between-ness. In concluding the chapter based on the Chinese diasporic cases’ present conditions, I invite the reader to reflect on further questions concerning cultural sustenance and artistic authenticity via third-space agencies and reinventions. These questions are a salient component of my research – particularly in reference to the future choreographic authorship of glocalized negotiations in The Third Space.

### **Beneath Movements: a Diasporic Enterprise of East-West Cultures and Politics**

Having choreographed and performed traditional Chinese and Chinese-Canadian dance works for years, I resolve to write about my dance experiences with a personal take. I have always known via my dance practice that there is something “more” beneath movements to offer the beholders. On that score, the chapters assume important work sites and stages in realizing this account. As the chapters proceed with my thoughts and elaborations on the Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Toronto and Vancouver Chinese diasporic choreographies, it becomes increasingly clear that the works are created with the back scenes of identity reassertion and/or reshaping. Gazing further and deeper, I see a corporeal collection of placial-social histories co-created by East-West cultural and political determinants.

Composing the theme chapters (2 and 3) has led to my acute awareness that Chinese diasporas in the East provoke as many questions and issues as those in the West. In probing Chinese identities choreographed in East Asian diasporas along with those choreographed in North America (Canada), I consider observing Chinese diasporic places closest to the Chinese ancestral culture as foremost important. In my analysis, I begin by first reviewing the Eastern and rooted socio-cultural sources and political information for a comprehensive view of Western-routed Chinese diasporic dance artistries. In thinking through the juxtaposed Hong Kong-Taiwan and Toronto-Vancouver choreographic models, I note that the broad spectrum is not strictly an Eastern or Western concern, but an ongoing East-West strategic collaboration and a global-local attribute of cultural and political enforcements.

From my perspective as a Chinese diasporic choreographer, dance is an alternative staging of the lived diasporas with multifarious cultures and politics. Referencing diasporic studies theorist Avar Brah's note of "deterritorialization" as "the displacement and dislocation of identities, persons, meanings, in the movement of alienation and exile located in language and literature" (1994, 203), dance history scholar Yatin Lin applies the situation to Chinese and other ethnic groups "scattered over the world" due to "various religious, political and economic reasons" (2004, 80). I suggest that dance artistries created along this mode of emigrated or displaced cultural identities are often politically and socially driven. The choreographic cornerstones and Eastern aesthetics discussed in the first part of my study are derived primarily from these identities. Those living in the Chinese diasporic places of Hong Kong and Taiwan have long been separated from ancestral mainland China for colonial, socio-ideological, and geopolitical-economic reasons. Hong Kong's transformation since the 1990s from a British colony to a special city-state of Hong Kongese administration under mainland Chinese

sovereignty, and Taiwan's establishment of a different Chinese identity initiated by exiled Chinese nationalists in the 1940s, register distinctive (capitalist) Chinese identities quite different from the (communist) mainland. In both cases, diasporic socio-cultural and political exigencies inspire and illuminate my investigation of the Hong Kong and Taiwanese identities as choreographically manifesting *Other Chinese-ness*.

Political and migratory circumstances originating from within and around the Chinese ancestral terrain in East Asia find equally vigorous cultural-political implications in Western/North American-based Chinese diasporic choreographies. The second half of my study unpacks placial and cosmopolitan politics as influential choreographic factors in the Canadian migrant settings of Toronto and Vancouver. Since the Canadian immigration apex of the 1970s and 80s, the cities absorbing East-West diverse inheritances have accelerated multicultural creative vibrancies in Chinese diasporic dance making. In my experiences as a Canadian migrant dance artist, both cities assume vital mosaic and cosmopolitical agencies for Chinese-Canadian dance expressions. On choreographic and receptive levels, the development of a *mixed Chinese-ness* with Canadian pluralistic cultures remains an artistic tribute (and challenge) in contemporary Canadian urban dance scenes. On an identity note, I see this diaporic mixture of Canadian and Chinese cultures as a Western/Canadian-forged existentiality. The official multicultural, migrant-friendly Canadian policy has opened up (for mainstream Canadians, Chinese and Other ethnicities) a "freer" framework of more and diverse (cultural, social, and artistic) choices, in which all involved are in adoptive-adopted progress and negotiation. Toronto multiculturalism and Vancouver cosmopolitanism therefore form the bases of cultural inclusivity and artistic fluidity in my researched dances with their heterogeneous placial identities.

The choreographic reinvention of Chinese diasporic identities blurring East-West boundaries engage acculturated artistries and choreographic multiplicities in all four case studies as outlined. It reflects a chain of artistic attitudes to explore and (re) authenticate Chinese-ness in diasporas. I interpret the event as the “third-space dance effects” transpiring in the affective presence of Others. Breaking away from extensive analyses on issues of the (Oriental or Western) Others connoting (post-) colonial cultural misrepresentations and/or socio-political hindrances, I rethink Otherness as a source of dance stimulants and inspirations in Chinese diasporas. My Toronto dance concepts drawing from the Hong Kong Chinese heritage and adopted Canadian culture(s), or Ng’s Hong Kong choreographies emerging from between his Canadian (National Ballet)-Hong Kong Chinese-British colonial experiences, are in fact made with and amid Others. Likewise, Lin’s Taiwanese repertoires immersed in traditional Chinese-Taiwan indigenous-Japanese colonial-American artistic influences, or Wang’s dance tracks reflecting mainland Chinese and Canadian social aesthetics, are produced among and through Others. The connections between selves and multiple Others in these third-space cases both expand and enrich local historical-cultural and global artistic-political perspectives in Chinese diasporic dance creations and reinventions of identities.

In the same breath, Otherness as identified in the individual cases indicate Other “selves” as it does Other (different) cultures. In my view, dancing Hong Kongese, Taiwanese, and Chinese-Canadian suggests performing Other Chinese selves of placial and technical essences detached from mainland Chinese ancestral soil. Furthermore, the term “Other” may be applied to the original Chinese homeland perceived (by diasporans) as an unfamiliar ancestral self adhering to a different social system and national polity. This notion of “self” as possibly Other is exemplified by the diasporic artist’s repatriation or visit to the Chinese ancestral territory with

the feelings of “both a returned native and a tourist” – and the “homeland” that is “no longer home” (Zheng 2010, 23). It is a social psyche and choreographic trait especially visible in the North American-grounded Chinese diasporic dances explored. Aside from Other (Western or Eastern) cultural and political considerations, the Chinese ancestral self-Other is often implied or sensed through the dance works. An ominous political presence lingering between the creative thoughts and actions of the choreographers dispersed and relocated recently or generations back, the Chinese ancestral nation generates a vivacious dance impetus and a political-ideological concern in the conscious and subconscious choreographic mindsets. In any case, the mainland Chinese duality of (ancestral) selfness versus (diasporic) Otherness stipulates the choreographic mobilization of the dancing body, in particular its corporeal ability to reflect and discuss history through drawing on the time-space engineered cultural, social and politically symbolic capitals (Foster 1995, 13-16). I therefore maintain that the Chinese ancestral self/Other presence is just as choreographically constructive and influential as the Other non-Chinese participating cultures in the diasporas under survey.

It is against such historic-cultural and geopolitical quandaries that I juxtapose, interpret, and assess selective Chinese diasporic choreographies of East Asian (Hong Kong-Taiwan) and North American/Canadian (Toronto-Vancouver) origins. The chapters present more than a “dance” matter of crossing or amalgamating East-West cultural identities, movement theories, and theatrical arts. The choreographic exemplifications reel out, from beneath corporeal expressions, the corroborating interactive paradigms of ethno-cultural and performance studies, history, and sociology. Thus the meanings of dance far exceed movement aesthetics. They concern the originating places (with their imbedded cultural spaces), the peoples inhabiting those places, and all the social and cultural decoding for the world to appreciate and reflect upon. It is a creative

and performed artistry that calls for “multi-dimensional considerations” within and beyond its specific geo-cultural and political scopes – the “critical window” to the “future” of Chinese diasporic dance artists that launches this study.

## Chapter 2

### Choreographing and Reinventing Chinese Diasporic *Roots*:

#### a Hong Kong-Taiwan Case Study

Identities are questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being (Hall 1996, 4).

Hybridity is occasionally constructed as simply “another kind of authenticity,” demonstrating the always-shifting nature of regimes of authenticity [.....] a term applied to diasporic performing artists “caught between their ancestral cultures and the dominant culture in which they live” (Taylor 2007, 12).

Worldwide Chinese migrations during the past two centuries have long reflected the Chinese diaspora(s) as a critical and complicated question of cultural resettlements, social adaptations, and community (re) productions across the East and West. In this chapter, I conduct a comparative diasporic case study of artistic implications between choreographers of Chinese descent inhabiting the East Asian sites of Hong Kong and Taiwan. I perceive the choreographers’ works in these diasporic sites as artistic outcomes of Homi Bhabha’s concept of “The Third Space” or cultural in-between-ness (cf. pp. 4-5; Footnote 4), and primarily “placial” (cf. p. 4; Footnote 3) products processed between Chinese ancestral *roots* and Euro-American Others. From a historic-ethnographic standpoint, the works are deemed local constituents of global migrant flows – the Arjun Appadurai termed “ethnoscape” (cf. p. 7; Footnote 5), and pertinent events of Roland Robertson’s perceived “glocalization” (cf. pp. 8-9; Footnote 6) – the intersected sphere of global political-economic trends and local cultural-creative experiences. I



suggest that these dance artistries witness fluid, multiple and hybrid Chinese identities of diverse cultural influences and East-West artistic infusions typifying the Chinese diasporic environs of Hong Kong and Taiwan. As creative entities developed away from the original mainland Chinese home soil, they present movement texts and cultural symbols akin to yet aesthetically and stylistically divergent from Chinese ancestral dance traditions (cf. Footnote 1).

My study engages representative Hong Kong and Taiwan choreographies that manifest distinct placial features of third-space and global-local impacts in recent decades. In this regard, I analyze Hong Kong choreographer and multidisciplinary artist Yuri Ng's balletic and photographic creations of Canadian and post-British colonial nuances (*Ordette's Ordeal*, 1996; *still dancing*, 2007; *Firecracker*, 2011) alongside Taiwan Cloud Gate Dance Theatre Artistic Director Lin Hwai-min's choreographic repertory (*Legacy*, 1978; *Nine Songs*, 1993; *Cursive II*, 2004). The works intermix localized Eastern aesthetics and globalized Western artistic forces in a third space innate to the Hong Kong and Taiwanese cosmopolitan diasporas, marking the choreographers' changing social identities in the diasporic process of cultural relocation and artistic synthesis. Enticed by both artists' third-space identity dynamics and choreographic acculturation (cf. Footnote 2) of the East and West, I examine the geopolitical movement concepts, cultural icons, music choices, and social meanings of their signature works. As such, my discourse denotes the works as place-derived Chinese diasporic dance products of cultural-artistic translation, interpretation, (re) appropriation and negotiation amid East-West cosmopolitan crossings and global-local connections.

In that vein, I propose that the third space indicates more than cultural but also global and local in between-ness. The notion of glocalization as "the global linking with the local, and the local constituting the global" (cf. p. 8) connects global views and practices with local social

constructs and creative inventions, and the social and economic patterns of local cultures with global political economies and relative implementations. It contains a macroscopic third/in-between space – “the cutting edge” of “translation and negotiation” between local ingredients and global coercions (cf. pp. 4-5, 8-9), wherein cultural and socio-political interpenetrations generate memorable and marketable products for both global and local reception. I observe that glocalization in dance predicates social and marketing developments from interactive global dissemination strategies and local cultural resources, operating upon an intrinsic intermediary space that connects global viewership with local consciousness and creative actions.

Ng’s case reflects “the global linking with the local” in bridging a global colonial past with local Hong Kong historicity and status quo. In choreographing with globally accessible balletic and photographic texts to interpret and re-connect with local Hong Kong socio-political episodes, Ng articulates an unsettled space between a Hong Kong colonial past under British capitalist administration and a fuzzy, anxious present of reclaimed Chinese communist sovereignty since 1997. The temporal identity and ideological dilemma metaphorically embedded in Ng’s works denote a “dance speech,”<sup>10</sup> upon which geopolitical Chinese displacement and a definitive Hong Kong belonging reminiscent of British colonial construction and accustomed civilian living are visually audible. Be it *Ordette’s Ordeal* – an artistic statement predicting the venturous quest of a Canadian ballet professional in rediscovering his birthplace of Hong Kong and associated artistic possibilities, *Firecracker* – a (re) appropriated version of the Western classical ballet *The Nutcracker* in inciting a nostalgic lament for a faded Hong Kong Chinese New Year tradition, or a female dancer’s obscure face emerging from

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<sup>10</sup> My reinvented dance term based on Judith Butler’s philosophical probe on speech act politics concerning the U.S. socio-cultural system and its diverse subjects (Butler 1997). I use the term to suggest dance or embodied texts that are performed and delivered in addressing diasporic tensions and civil struggles between the governing and the governed.

behind an outdated, steel cast Royal British colonial symbol at the City Hall Memorial Garden in *still dancing*, the danced and photographed scenes both sustain and reinstate “Hong Kongese” *roots* (Lau 1988, 2). They unveil, after all, an inherently mixed identity of British colonial social values and Chinese ancestral traits characteristic of Hong Kong’s cosmopolitan vicinage.

Lin’s case of Chinese ancestral, Asian and American contemporary artistic concoctions, on the other hand, reflects “the local constituting the global” in his use of local Taiwanese experiences and Chinese traditional values to identify a diasporic Taiwanese-ness of global attention and receptivity. Lin’s theoretical insights of Taiwan – a place interlacing Chinese heritage with diverse cultural features, are translated via Chinese classical and modern dance texts in the *Legacy* historic narrative, melded in a Taiwan indigenous/Asian Others re-interpretation of the ancient Chinese poetic epic *Nine Songs*, and abstractly negotiated between Chinese Taoist-Zen Buddhist inceptions, Japanese aesthetics, and American contemporary/avant-garde music in *Cursive II*. In presenting a “culturally inauthentic” (Lin 2010, 259) Chinese-ness of hybrid structures and qualities unique to Taiwan’s cosmopolitan fabric and socio-cultural diversity, Lin references a new Sino-based and authentic “Taiwanese” identity of place-oriented acculturation forged beyond the mainland Chinese ancestral realm. The cultural mixtures and relative artistic sources in his works, all locally drawn and organized with a deepened Taiwanese belonging, manifest Taiwanese *roots* enduring multiple colonialisms and Others’ impacts to establish a Chinese identity of Taiwan distinction. A transplant and reinvention of Chinese culture on Taiwanese geography, this new Chinese identity avowed in Lin’s repertory suggests a cultural and performed episteme that is both socio-politically provocative and artistically intriguing.

I perceive the choreographed contents on the dance stage and on camera as a performed

synthesis of Eastern aesthetics and Western artistic features. The process of acculturating Chinese themes and aesthetics with Western and Other art forms kindles the diasporic natures of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Ng's artistic cultivations of dancing Hong Kong histories with British ballet steps date back to Chinese ancestral migrations or political flights to British Hong Kong from mainland Chinese nationalist and communist regimes in the past century (Lau, 2). Lin's choreographic products of Taiwan indigenous, contemporary American, and post-colonial Japanese nuances can be traced back to Taiwan's foremost Chinese pioneers from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and a difficult ancestral separation from mainland China during nationalist exiles to Taiwan under communist defeats in the 1940s (Jordan 2004, 4-5).

The artistic urge in Ng and Lin as descendants of the migrants in expressing rooted Chinese traditional values and hybrid socio-cultural elements is socially logical and significant. It reflects a "habitus" stature (Bourdieu 1993, 86) developed through the inhabited environs of historical impacts and social forces, in which the artistic mind and body acquire and project (with or without preconceived or strategic intents) those impacts and forces tracing an individual history, a social (diasporic) identity, and geo-specific cultural and aesthetic characteristics. On that subject, the two artists' works diffuse respectively the lived and living "Hong Kong" and "Taiwan" spirits of Chinese diasporic aura. Their repertoires reveal an intrinsic spontaneity in engaging the Chinese ancestral land's cultural, political and artistic ethos as inspirations and conceptual tools, and the Other cultural-artistic attributes of the Hong Kong and Taiwan social ambiances as creative vibes and vocabularies. The artistic attitude and choreographic substances indicate primarily two Chinese diasporic societies evolving between different influential cultures, progressing through place-time historicity with a new/changing Chinese identity that is rather different from its mainland Chinese ancestry.

My choreographic examples under examination do not visually depict or focus on Chinese national politics and the socio-ideologically framed Chinese dance traditions. However, the omnipotent presence of the Chinese mother nation behind creative curtains remains a muted authoritative concern – an artistic drive and illuminant in both artists’ productions. I assert that Ng’s and Lin’s choreographic expressions of loaded historical and intercultural topics are essentially third-space and glocalized identity products. Without local Chinese, global colonial and current diasporic Others’ participations, they would never have become the socially and culturally intricate embodiments of hybrid selves – the Other Chinese traits of Western cultural-artistic and socio-political influences.

The choreographers’ social backgrounds, artistic statements, and personal convictions inspire and navigate my comparative analysis of their dance creations. As a former Hong Kong citizen and Chinese-Canadian dance artist sharing the same Chinese ancestry and similar diasporic conditions, I approach my study with an experiential perspective of the choreographers’ creative endeavours and cultural-political struggles. In view of socio-historical attributions and cultural associations in both the native and diasporic lands as key illuminants of this study, I will provide an initial glimpse of the social and geopolitical conditions in which Ng and Lin dwell and thrive. Delving into their respective choreographies, I will analyze them as glocalized art forms of local cultural rooted-ness and global affectivity-receptivity engendered in a conscious or subconscious “third space” in diasporas. In this framework, the mixing and merging of Chinese and Other cultures in an in-between space illustrates Bhabha’s cultural space of consistent translation and negotiation as one effecting constant (re) appropriation, likewise diverse artistic dialoguing in the fluid and hybrid Chinese identity configurations of Hong Kong and Taiwan distinctness. The connectivity of local specificities with global events and impacts

in the Ng-Lin dance collections educe my reflections on “reinvented” Chinese diasporic authenticity and placial belongingness from an East Asian socio-historical perspective.

## **PART I: Dancing Hong Kong – a Rediscovery of Local Roots**

Part 1 of my study focuses on Yuri Ng, a former Toronto dance artist with the National Ballet of Canada (NBOC), and a repatriate artist to his birthplace of Hong Kong in the 1990s to begin a choreographic career that has mesmerized Hong Kong and international audiences. Presently serving as Co-Artistic Director for the Hong Kong Ballet Group, Ng has created critical works grounded on self and Hong Kong-based experiences, earning prestigious recognition including the Artist (Choreographer) of the Year Award from the Hong Kong Artists’ Guild in 1997, Prix D’auteur (Choreographic Award) at the International Choreographic Meetings of Seine-Saint-Denis (Bagnolet) in France, 1998, and the Hong Kong Dance Alliance Dance Award in 2004 and 2013. At the time of Ng’s professional re-establishment in Hong Kong, the city was about to be returned to mainland Chinese ascendancy after 150 years of British colonial sovereignty – the prize of Chinese defeat in the Opium War in 1842.<sup>11</sup> Hong Kong, a political-economically strategic place covering the Kowloon peninsula attached to mainland China, and the Hong Kong Island just a thin South China Sea strip away from Kowloon, remained a British colony until 1997. After its return to China, Hong Kong has

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<sup>11</sup> The Chinese defeat in the First Opium War (1839-42) over conflicts of British opium imports in exchange for Chinese tea resulted in the ceding of Hong Kong Island as a crown colony to the British Empire at the signing of the Treaty of Nanking (1842). Between 1860 and 1898, after another Chinese defeat at the Second Opium War (1860), the United Kingdom gained a perpetual lease of the Kowloon Peninsula located in the mainland Chinese area just a strait across from Hong Kong Island, followed by a 99-year lease of Hong Kong’s surrounding small islands called the New Territories, which the British promised to return to China upon lease expiry. The agreements were signed at the First and Second Conventions of Beijing (1860 and 1898) that ended the Sino-British opium conflicts. On December 19, 1984, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration, in which Britain agreed to return not only the New Territories but also Kowloon and Hong Kong in 1997. China promised to implement a 50-year “One Country, Two Systems” policy in Hong Kong, under which Hong Kong citizens could continue to practice capitalism and political freedoms forbidden on the mainland. (See Tsang 2004, 33-35; Carroll 2007, 221-228; Bridgman 1841, *The Chinese Depository*, Vol. 10, 63-64. Web.)

maintained a 50-year “One Country-Two Systems” policy implemented by the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration (Patten 1998, 14) intended for easing juridical transitioning. The declaration of Hong Kong as a “Special Administrative Region” guarantees the city’s capitalist gains and trading accesses, legal structure, and socio-political administration free from mainland Chinese operations until 2047 (McMillan and DeGolyer 1993, 13-20). As a returning Toronto migrant artist, Ng engages extensively in diverse professional events reflective of Hong Kong’s cultural pluralism and East-West artistic confluences. In utilizing Western balletic and theatrical arts to mount his dance productions of Hong Kong Chinese-ness, Ng seems to have rediscovered his artistic path and creative niche on Hong Kong soil after years of Canadian ballet occupations.

Since Hong Kong’s return to mainland Chinese jurisdiction, a homegrown “Hong Kong” identity persistently re-emerges among Hong Kong people committing to a Hong Kong lifestyle of socio-economic pluralism introduced by past British administration (Patten, 15-20). A major portion of the population, whose ancestors fled Chinese nationalist corruption, Chinese communism and the Chinese Cultural Revolution on the mainland between the 1930s and 70s, have chosen “Hong Kongers” (Patten, 15) or “Hong Kongese” (Lau, 2) over “Chinese” as their identity. Many of Ng’s beliefs and values as a reinstated Hong Kong citizen-artist underpin the choreographic aesthetics that speak of his Hong Kong *roots* and identity. His works are often interfused with social and historic-cultural meanings relating typical Hong Kong experiences, or personal diasporic sentiments generated between past British and present Chinese governances. To Ng, Hong Kong is not merely “the economic capital of the Chinese diaspora” (Patten, 14). The regional-ness or Hong Kong-ness that distinguishes Hong Kong as a “place” sharing the same mainland Chinese ancestral roots but demonstrating a (temporary) Western-based socio-political system of distinct social values remains as Ng’s artistic haven – a native sphere of

diasporic features that continually inspire and enrich his choreographic undertakings.

Ng's signature works over again portray the socio-historical and placial circumstances of Hong Kong. A most representative example is *Firecracker* (2011) – an Eastern version of *The Nutcracker* created by Ng after his return to Hong Kong. Prior to examining the work's choreographic implications, I will first flip the memory page to a short piece created by Ng when he was still dancing with the National Ballet of Canada more than two decades ago. The piece entitled *Ordet's Ordeal* (1992) is what I believe to be the creative thread to Ng's later artistic developments in Hong Kong, and a prelude to the choreographic impetus of *Firecracker*.

I can still remember that opening scene with a huge, messy bunch of ballet pointe shoes thrown right out to stage centre, followed by the entry of a plump black swan dancing with clumsy, awkward steps imaged after certain classical ballet movements and gestures. A slim and long legged white swan appeared soon after, attempting to create a pas de deux with the seemingly confused and dazed black swan. As a curious audience member and dance student, I attended a post-performance session held by Ng and his “unconventional” swan dancers, where I heard the confession of Ng as a young, striving dance professional: “I question classical ballet. I question my own, and other male ballet dancers’ existence under professional spotlights. The performance of classical ballet has for centuries focused on the stage aesthetics of ballerinas – perpetually promoted by the “pointe shoes” icon. I question the “meaningful purpose” of my being a male ballet dancer – who doesn’t really have anything to do with those iconic shoes” (Quah 1992, Ng/post-performance talk).

Ng's “question” raises the central issue of the perpetual supportive and secondary role of male ballet dancers – a ballet identity that is often overshadowed or dismissed by traditional Western ballet aesthetics and viewing expectations. Ng's characterization of the black and white



swans without the “expected” ballerina physiques of ethereal grace and self-assurance is a virtual reflection of himself as a stage product of “displacement” and “uncertainties.” His caricature of classical ballet femininity is innovative – with the thrown-out pointe shoes and anti-traditional ballerina bodies venting a practitioner’s frustration on traditional ballet aesthetics and male roles in ballet performances. Embedded in his satirical expression is a personal statement about an intrinsic call or emotional urge for “change.” I sense that the idea of a needed change from Western social norms and artistic representations underlies the creation of the piece, and is instrumental in paving Ng’s eventual Hong Kong repatriation to explore choreographic choices and artistic media beyond the artistic conventions of Western classical ballet. Ng’s homebound decision signifies the beginning of an artistic trail in rediscovering himself, and his social and artistic values within the “home” energy of Hong Kong to which he is naturally attuned.

“I’ve always joked with my peers at the NBOC that I’d be staging my Hong Kong version of *The Nutcracker* called *Firecracker* one day” (ibid). Ng’s somewhat lighthearted twist of the topic close to the end of his talk still amazes me. The localization of a globalized/Western dance repertoire as *The Nutcracker* on the Hong Kong dance stage was what I had least expected after Ng’s talk – not when he actually created *Firecracker* for The Hong Kong Ballet Company in 2011. The work exemplifies an artistic conjuration of “the global linking with the local” (see above/p. 27) in that Ng contextually links the globally celebrated Western classical ballet bodywork of *The Nutcracker* to reconfigure a Hong Kong story of 1967 – an era of affective local experiences and social reflections. It (re) appropriates the original Western Christmas classic into a Chinese New Year celebration with the thematic Chinese icon of firecrackers, expressing the core sentiments and social values of colonial and post-colonial Hong Kong cultures. The year 1967 in Hong Kong was one marked by social and political riots when, in

ideological conjunction with the escalating Chinese Cultural Revolution on the mainland, local leftist-planted bombings in the city in protestation of British sovereignty stirred civilian fears and governmental concerns. Firecrackers discharged in Hong Kong neighbourhoods at momentous celebrations including Chinese New Year were officially banned on grounds of social safety after the mishap (Theatres in Hong Kong 2011, web). I see the piece's opening with the elderly uncle raising and admiring the stringed firecrackers as Ng's aesthetic re-imagination of a riot-free city celebrating Chinese New Year "with firecrackers" in that same Hong Kong era. The choreographic approach transmits a regretful nostalgia of the vanished Chinese firecrackers (street) tradition from Hong Kong, particularly among the colonized generations that Ng was a part of at birth.

Ng has stated that *Firecracker* is full of symbolism, whether the audience can tell or not (ibid). The re-creation of street firecrackers in the piece in substitution of their realistic disappearance, apart from projecting Ng's yearning of a lost local cultural practice, reminds me of Ackbar Abbas' note of current Hong Kong as a "cultural space of disappearance" (1997, 1). To this effect, what is disappearing is not just the colonial aura of Hong Kong's mixed Chinese and British/Western social and economic patterns, but also local historic-cultural representations of Hong Kong as a special diasporic construct of Chinese ancestral and British colonial imprints. In the midst of a changing post-colonial socio-political structure adhering to the "One country-two systems" policy, Hong Kong exists as an "in-between" city in a critical space co-produced by past British colonialism and present reclaimed Chinese sovereignty. It is precisely this culturally and socio-politically in-between Hong Kong-ness – a logical consequence of global colonial and local experiences, that constitutes the inmost aspiration and artistic expressivity of *Firecracker* (Fig. 1).

As observed through major *Firecracker* scenes, the diverse movement vocabularies, stage props and costuming elucidate multiple cultural identities and intercultural characteristics processed in a third/in-between space. Ng's constant crossings between his Chinese ancestral and Canadian identities, his British Hong Kong colonial upbringing, and his primary "dance" identity as a classical ballet professional yield versatile choreographic possibilities. The creative combination of these possibilities radiates a distinctive Hong Kong-ness through the work. The soloist in her 1960s flurry skirt swirling back to a Hong Kong stage set of 1967 on continuous piqué turns,<sup>12</sup> the merging of upward, arrogant balletic bodies with the modest, well wishing Chinese hand gestures of "Gong Hey Fat Choi!" (A happy and prosperous Chinese New Year!),<sup>13</sup> the youngsters' exciting bourrées<sup>14</sup> with their Chinese New Year red packets of lucky money held high and joyous, the Cantonese movie characters in traditional kung fu attires casting forth mystic energy with forward, flexed palms, the A Go-Go party dancing with pointed balletic feet plunged straight and sturdy onto the stage floor – all but accentuate a cultural in-between-ness in a Hong Kong locality of Western and global infiltrations. The third-space phenomenon of interpenetrated or amalgamated Hong Kong and Euro-Western social trends and artistic traditions as conveyed by the movement-and-prop aesthetics foreground a "floating" (ibid) Hong Kong cultural identity from a colonial era onstage to a post-colonial audience mindset offstage. In this mode, the work performs as a socio-historical interpreter, evoking a

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<sup>12</sup> A sequence of classical ballet travel turns executed with one leg stepping out onto a full or demi pointe foot followed by the other leg en passé (placed like a triangular form with toes touching the back knee of the stepped-out leg). As the turns proceed, the hands cohere in alternating open (when stepping out) and closed (when turning) positions.

<sup>13</sup> A typical Chinese New Year gesture with finger-crossed hands joined and placed in front of the chest to suggest a courtesy bow and well wishing token.

<sup>14</sup> Tiny and quick travelling classical ballet steps with one leg crossing in front of the other (in 5<sup>th</sup> position/on full or demi pointe) while keeping both knees tight and straight. The steps consistently propelled by the back leg may travel any direction – forward, backward, sideways, or in a circle etc..

collective cultural memory of a Hong Kong community in the 1960s, and simultaneously posing the social question of “What was, and where is Hong Kong” in its “mutating” status (ibid) between British colonialist capitalism and Chinese socialist sovereignty.

Elaborating on *Firecracker*’s interpretive role, I connect the theatrical expression in the work with that of a dance speech. (See Footnote 10). In this case, the theatrical scenes are choreographed exemplars of Judith Butler’s articulation of speech expressed through bodily acts as resting within and indicating the idea of the performative (1997, 12-14). The scene featuring the seven Hong Kong movie princesses<sup>15</sup> dancing side by side with Royal family puppet figures, a deconstruction from the original lavish *Nutcracker* scene of visiting foreign dignitaries, can be viewed as an amusing recap of a colonial British and colonized Hong Kong relation.

Juxtaposing the Hong Kong movie princesses as cinematic tactics/products with the British royal visits common in the 1960s, Ng has hinted through the dancing bodies typical strings-attached obligations of the British colonialists toward the colonized, and vice versa. In a lighthearted and entertaining manner, Ng, the choreographer-speaker of the event, visibly vocalizes the idea of a dazzling action-performance pivotal in maintaining a politically and economically vibrant rapport between British colonial administration and a commercially viable Hong Kong. An echo of speech act as “agency” (ibid), this dramatic dance expression performs beyond the visual effects of family entertainments, delivering an artistic commentary and a social awareness of a Hong Kong present evolved through historic-placial elements of global colonial-local experiential circumstances.

Selfhood expressed in *Firecracker*, in addition, magnifies the agency of dance speech in the hospital scene that creatively overrides the classic *Nutcracker* Christmas snow scene. In focusing on the uncle as a frail and aging firecrackers maker dwelling on fond memories of the

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<sup>15</sup> Teenage Hong Kong actresses popularized and commoditized by the Cantonese filmmaking industry in the 1960s and 70s.

old days, Ng utters his concerns over aging male ballet dancers who frequently play supportive roles and exit after brief stage appearances – like those playing Uncle Drosselmeyer in *The Nutcracker* (Theatres in Hong Kong, web). It is an issue already implicated in his choreographic debut of *Ordette's Ordeal* as previously discussed. Speaking out for male dancers, Ng also sees himself in the shoes of the aging uncle, who will eventually exit the stage spotlight as his years advance. The hospital scene is Ng's vivid expression of aging that has always haunted him as a ballet professional. Ng admits that the scene was inspired by hospital visits with his ailing father in Hong Kong (Quah 2012, 17) – as noted through a past telephone conversation with Ng during my doctoral studies. It replaces the original beautiful and romantic *Nutcracker* snow scene with a hospital environment of cold, medical whiteness reflecting off the sickbed and the nurses' uniforms. The head nurse's gigantic needle aiming at the sick uncle, and the attending nurses' lifted back legs pointing high and linear by the bedside – a unified metaphor miming huge invasive needles at the point of injection, under a psychical lens, iterate the invasive fear and discomforts of aging. Changing the fairy-tale tranquility of *The Nutcracker* into a harsh reality of inevitable life challenges and pressures in *Firecracker*, Ng's self-reflexive expression of an artistic struggle against ballet fantasies and illusions is made visible on his Hong Kong native soil – the third space in which to epitomize his local Hong Kong living and global-Western artistic canvas.

The “Hong Kong Chinese-ness” of ballet as expressed in *Firecracker* finds an existential equivalence with the “Filipinization” of ballet, which Sally Ann Ness addresses as “a multifaceted cultural movement and not simply a post-independence by-product” (1997, 68). Inquiring into the cultural responsibility of the Ballet Philippines through *Igorot* – a balletic repertory based on local Cordilleran myths and dance traditions, Ness pinpoints a historical

resonance of multi colonial and local cultural features that represent an “intersection” of diverse cultural traits and techniques in the Philippines context. It calls forth “an international aesthetic discourse” on a Filipino identity construct via ballet and Filipino folk crafts and stories (ibid, 67). Similar to the Filipinization of ballet, Ng’s *Firecracker* of localized Hong Kong-ness has involved “commitments and produced effects” concerning “private aesthetic, conceptual, personal, physiological and social dimensions of individuals [ ..... ] and of local communities” (ibid, 68). The *Firecracker* dance bodies did not originate at the NBOC backstage, or at the moment of Hong Kong’s return to mainland China, but from a lived and living Hong Kong experience. Like the dance bodies of Ballet Philippines, they originate from “within complex cultural, individual and social histories” (ibid). Borrowing from Gayatri Spivak’s reflection on the violence of cultural nationalism, post-colonialism, globility and denaturalized ethnicity, *Firecracker* can be fathomed as “that ‘feeling’ of being from an origin” (1992, 10).

“My works have explored ‘originality’ as a Hong Kong citizen with the background of a former ballet practitioner in England and Canada; many of them relay my rooted Hong Kong sentiments” (Quah 2012, 19). For Ng, rediscovering the native and placial roots of Hong Kong is fundamental to his choreographic concepts of cultural and interdisciplinary multiplicity. Ng’s creative initiatives embed abstract identity transpositions, flashing complex revelations of the past and contemporary, of Eastern values and Western influences. His works articulate a strong tie to the transitioning Hong Kong Chinese-ness, despite transcultural and hybridized footprints. *still dancing*, the images of 15 Hong Kong choreographers created by Ng as a photographic component of the dance production *My Life as a Dancer: the Evolution (MLDE)* for the Hong Kong Art Festival in 2007, is fervent testimony to his artistic verve. The project that Ng calls a “photo-choreography” (*MLDE* photo booklet 2007, 1) catches transient movements and partial

images of the featured choreographers in demolished or soon to be demolished sites, through which a vanishing “placial identity” of local Hong Kong values is brought to audience awareness.

Ng envisions each photo as a pas de deux between the photographed choreographer and his/her chosen site. Captured in contemporary dance and pedestrian movements, the individual choreographers’ feelings toward the sites that have accompanied them since birth or childhood summon a dialogue of community nostalgia with the beholders. To mention an evocative few: the Kam Tin Clinic in Yuen Long (Fig. 2-A) is the site for the former Kam Tin Gynecology Hospital where Victor Ma was born. Holding onto branches and twigs at the backyard of the current clinic replacing the hospital, Ma’s gesture utters a deep emotional link with his birth site. Caught on a sidewalk between Lomond Road Garden and her alma mater is Helen Lai’s shadow with an upraised hand (Fig. 2-B) – a reaching back to an old school path in memory. Fleeing past Lok Hau Fook (Blessed Joyful Mouth) Restaurant’s rusty gate is Mui Cheuk-yin’s partial upper profile (Fig. 2-C) – a nostalgic recital of family dining and peer gatherings in the weathered and now closed local eatery. British colonial presence re-emerges through Yeung Wai-mei’s shielded appearance from behind the Royal British emblem stationed at the Hong Kong City Hall Memorial Garden (Fig. 2-D), where Hong Kong and British lives lost in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War are commemorated. Siu-ming Lau, the eldest of all the choreographers, is seen by his kneeling feet at the historical Tin Hau (Sky Goddess) Temple (Fig. 2-E) – a scene of peaceful submission to natural physical deterioration and supplication for supernatural blessings as old age approaches. I consider these examples as the thematic synopsis of Ng’s photo series. They represent one’s social and cultural attachment to Hong Kong as the native place and communal site, the fluid in-between state of Hong Kong moving on from residual British colonial

governance to reclaimed Chinese sovereignty, and a visual sharing of local vulnerability and ambiguity about this transitioning social temporality.

A photographic portraiture of Butler's concept of the performative speech act (1997, cf. p. 37), Ng's photo-choreography assumes the expressive bodily act of translating a placial-cultural recognition of a Hong Kong past and evolving present. It corresponds with Diana Taylor's theoretic insight of "an act of transfer,"<sup>16</sup> which transmits "social knowledge, memory and a sense of identity" through embodied performance (2003, 2). The photographs enable this act by making the "missing" (demolished/disappearing buildings or sites, childhood, youth, or a post-colonial foresight) belong in some way to the Hong Kong citizens, producing a sense of inclusion for those who are not involved, or feel unassimilable. Taylor's idea of the visually affective image as a performative speech act is present throughout Ng's photographed "bodies in places," with the individual movements or gestures communicating unique emotional responses and specific meanings on a site of personal significance. The meaning of each picture, whether personal, social or historical, filters through instilled movements to activate a silent interaction between the photographed as speakers and the audience as listeners. The artistic process reaffirms the transient, camera-immortalized moments as a vital agency that associates the visually performed with relevant socio-historical and cultural implications. In the meantime, it assumes an act of interlocution (Butler, 5; Taylor, 243) in its performance power to re-territorialize (the demolished or vanishing to the people's socio-cultural knowledge) and redress (government decisions in deconstructing social features and community traditions). Revisiting

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<sup>16</sup> Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor uses the term to illustrate communal and psychological impacts of posted photos of the "missing" throughout New York streets and stores during the 9/11 terrorist destruction of the World Trade Centre. She reads the photos as vital in invoking a collective action and testimony of finding the "disappeared," in which case the historic event is transferred into the conscious living of all New Yorkers – the victims' friends or families, non-victims, or passers-by, in the hope, or in the mourning (2003, 247, 250). I reapply the term to describe Ng's photo-choreographic series, which I feel deliver the exact same performative power in connecting beholders to the images' social identities, historical spots, and all emotions attached.



Abbas' perception of an absent or indefinite social and cultural identity of Hong Kong in its transforming state from a British colonial past to the current moulding of a "Chinese global city" (1997, 4), I evaluate the project as a performative means of personal coping with social changes, and a collective memory of waning placial, cultural, and personal trademarks.

"It talks about aging, about a fleeting life span, especially that of a dancer; it is a collective body language to acknowledge the past and the transient," shared Ng (Quah 2012, 23). The project that freezes the living moments of individual bodies and spirits conversing with past and existing placial energies, furthermore, expresses Ng's self-identity as the aging dancer – a concern that seems to recurrently charge his various works. The aged dancer will eventually exit from the main stage, as will the Hong Kong colonial residues and characteristic features from socio-political spotlight. The project remains a telling metaphor of the Hong Kong situation and sentiments. Ng as the photographer-choreographer purposely leaves himself out of the pictures. The choice/act posits him as the "witness" of the fleeting moments, and the visual recorder of the living and transient experiences of the photographed. It marks the transformation of lived memories and individual translations of occurring events as "repertoires" (Taylor, 243) – the ephemeral, embodied practice or performance transfusing a sense of social history, cultural and political standings of a place like Hong Kong, and the intrinsic feelings of a people addressing local changes and personal re-adaptations since the city's official return to mainland Chinese jurisdiction.

*still dancing*, a contemporary portrayal of a Hong Kong Chinese testimony of "place-time" signification, deposes a creative concept developed through Hong Kong's diasporic condition and Ng's East-West immersions. It employs the globalized Western artstries of contemporary movements and abstract photocompositions in telling individualized stories of Hong Kong locals

(and dance artists). Equipped with diverse cultural experiences and artistic training as a Canadian migrant repatriate and Hong Kong multidisciplinary artist, Ng combines the multiple aesthetics of dance movements, bodily gestures, camera angles, and meaningful locus in choreographing his portrait of Hong Kong. The attempt per se reflects Ng's third-space stance between Eastern and Western cultures, variant artistic devices, and his interlocutory presence in connecting the Hong Kong past with an undefinable future. I note that the photo-choreography series suggests an artistic duality of Western contemporary "site-specific" dance<sup>17</sup> and the Chinese Taoist philosophy of "motion in stillness, and stillness in motion,"<sup>18</sup> where "stillness" motivates and mobilizes the receptivity of sensed and imagined dramas within the dance sites. When the movements are captured and frozen in time, space, and silence, multiple discourses ranging from placial sentiments to submerged socio-historical and cultural concerns start emerging in the audience's intuitive and psychical knowledge zones. Perusing the shuttered moments fleeting across Hong Kong landscapes, buildings and symbolic objects in the series, one can hear the "still and quiet" roar.

A speech, as in creative works, is filled with varying degrees of "otherness" and "our ownness," and varying degrees of awareness and detachment (Bakhtin 1986, 89). Mikhail Bakhtin analyzes that ethnographically, selfness is a product of otherness, and self-identification is conceived in the presence of the other. Butler's broader explication of the speech act as a bodily expression constituting social existences through interlocution, and through verbal recognition of

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<sup>17</sup> A Western contemporary dance trend (of the early 2000s) promoting interactive creative energies between the dancing bodies and specific performance sites including parks, streets, or museums etc..

<sup>18</sup> An illustrative concept derived from the Chinese Taoist doctrine of the yin (stilly, soft and subtle) and yang (active, strong and solid) forces that maintain equilibrium of the universe through dynamic interactions and mutual reinforcements. In Taoist perspective, yin contains the seed of yang, and yang contains the seed of yin, similar to the states of *wu* (non being) and *you* (being) that grow out of one another (Hsiung 2005, 113, 116-117). "Stillness" suggesting yin or *wu*, and "motion" indicating yang or *you*, and the two's polarizing and inter-generative properties aptly depict Ng's photo-choreographic essence in this discursive segment.

the other (1997) basically resonates with Bakhtin's idea on identification sought between the self and others. I perceive the above works of Ng as fitting choreographic modules of this self-other identity constitution. Ng's self-awareness in the *Ordette's Ordeal* scenario raised within a Canadian/Western Other's ballet convention, his showcase of a Hong Kong-ness co-authored by British colonialists and the Chinese ancestral self-Other<sup>19</sup> in *Firecracker*, his detached camera eye catching the emotive body-and-site performance of a disappearing Hong Kong culture with a bygone British Otherness – all are creative speech products of his selfhood and the (cultural) Others involved in the Hong Kong social developments and symptoms. His Hong Kong identities of Chinese, British and Canadian traces and relative artistic-aesthetic multiplicity, in essence, are shaped and built through self-acknowledgement of those Others in his cultural and creative peripherals. I observe such peripherals as the third space operating between global-Western and local Hong Kong forces, where selfness and Otherness consistently “assimilate, rework and re-accentuate” (Bakhtin, 89) to fabricate Ng's very own dance language.

At times I wonder what my ballet mentor Madam Jean Wong<sup>20</sup> thinks of my present works. She first trained me when I was six, watched me through later trainings and professional developments with the Royal Ballet School in London, England, the National Ballet School and the National Ballet of Canada in Toronto. Had she ever intended for me to become a classical ballet prince, she might be disappointed with the “dancer-choreographer” I've become today – being kind of “hybrid” (Quah 2012, 26).

Ng's concern about his shifts from the authentic purity of ballet in the eyes of the respected Hong Kong ballet doyenne is understandable. In my perspective, his works characterize a contemporary diasporic dance expression forged in a third space between Eastern and Western

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<sup>19</sup> In performance studies, the “Other(s)” may be applied to indicate the original culture perceived by diasporans as the distant, unfamiliar ancestral self and/or its disparate socio-political system. (See Zheng 2010, 23; cf. pp. 22-23).

<sup>20</sup> One of the most prominent ballet influences and Royal Academy of Dance educators in Hong Kong, Madam Jean Wong established the Jean M. Wong School of Ballet in 1960 and has nurtured over two generations of classically trained dancers, teachers and balletomanes. She is a founding member of the Hong Kong Ballet Group, an honorary adviser to the Hong Kong Ballet Company, Hong Kong Dance Company, and the City Contemporary Dance Company of Hong Kong. (See Jean Wong 2017, web.)

cultural dynamics and geopolitics. After all, Ng's choreographic passage is an astute reflection of a contemporary sensitivity and responsiveness toward his Hong Kong cultural traditions and social identity interminably constructed and shaped in that versatile third space. Hybrid concepts, interdisciplinary media, diverse movement texts and aesthetics elapsing through his ballet training are the artistic means rather than the consequence – the pragmatic instruments in presenting or representing truthful thoughts of himself and his milieu. Virtually hybrid are the socio-cultural variances, the ever evolving and expanding artistic choices that configure his professional and social being, not quite his dance identity or creative language. Hybridization is more so a creative process and an artistic structure in building a choreographic integrity and personal style that is “purely” Ng's in a Hong Kong cosmopolitan urbanity of third-space inauguration. Ng's dance, in this sense, continues to project an unconventional, beyond balletic, and self-authenticating voice that speaks to contemporary local and global audiences.

## **PART II: Choreographing Taiwan – a Reinvention of Chinese Roots**

Part II of my study centres on the choreographic works of Lin Hwai-min – Founder and Artistic Director for The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Lin's works draw incessantly from Taiwan's rooted history and a unique Chinese cultural identity evolving through Taiwanese socio-cultural and political particularities. Lin, of Min-nan (southern Chinese) descent, is part of the post-war generation born and raised in Taiwan – a place of mixed colonial histories and political changes. A former Chinese territory located off the southeastern coast of mainland China, Taiwan has experienced Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch occupations in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Chinese provincial administration in 1885, Japanese colonialism from 1895 to 1945, and the eventual sovereignty of Chinese nationalists fleeing communist defeats from the

mainland since 1949 (Lin 2010, 252; Jordan 2004, 4-5, 7). The first mainland Chinese pioneers consisting of mostly southern Chinese migrants from Fujian Province arrived in Chinese-administered Taiwan in the 1880s. Social chaos and the change to a Chinese communist regime between the 1940s and 50s led to influxes of mainland Chinese intellectuals, civic and military members to Taiwan, followed by the nationalist governmental imposition of a 40-year martial law to suppress political opposition and restrict constitutional rights. The Austronesians,<sup>21</sup> believed to be the earliest Taiwan indigenous settlers, retreated to mountainous regions in sustaining their cultural traditions amidst colonial threats, Chinese influxes, and political riots (Jordan, 7).

Taiwan's social and geopolitical complexities inform and inspire many of Lin's works reflecting Chinese diasporic and local Taiwanese *roots* of multiple colonization and cultural hybridization. Of significant note is an extensive American impact on Lin's creative and movement choices. The American economic aid programs and influence on a higher education system of mixed Chinese and American models (Postiglione 1997, 346-348) in post-war Taiwan, and American modern dance companies touring Taiwan in the Cold War era between the 1960s and 70s considerably motivated Lin to obtain his MFA degree through the Writers' Workshop program at the University of Iowa, and his modern dance training in the Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham studios when studying in the United States. One can say American intellectual and dance experiences paved Lin's way to founding Cloud Gate Dance Theatre as Taiwan's first professional dance company in the early 1970s. Historic-colonial and socio-political complexities of the epoch attributing Taiwan-based Chinese, American, indigenous, and

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<sup>21</sup> The Austronesian peoples dispersed over South East Asia, Oceania, and East Africa speak languages under the Austronesian superfamily. They include Taiwanese aborigines, various ethnic groups in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Madagascar, and Polynesia etc.. Archeological research has suggested that the group that carried the ancestral language was originated on the island of Taiwan – after the migration of pre-Austronesian-speaking peoples from continental Asia between approximately 10,000–6,000 BCE. (See Blust 1999, 31-94.)

Japanese consciousness (Lin, 253), overall, led to an emotive cultural awakening in Lin's choreographic attitude, and a perpetrated embodiment of such in the Cloud Gate dance paradigm.

Lin's works theorize and specify a Chinese identity (re) constructed and developed in Taiwan – the “diasporic home” (Brah 1996, 192) officially called The Republic of China (ROC) that operates a capitalist-democratic and multi-partied governance in contrast to the mainland Chinese communist authoritarianism of The People's Republic of China (PRC). Chinese nationalist expatriates, mainland Chinese migrants and descendants constituting Taiwan's majority population and governing supremacy see themselves as instigators of a “Taiwanese” national identity (Ngo and Wang 2011, 12). The Chinese identity reconstruction subsists hand in hand with the hopeful urge of rebuilding a home site of new beginnings against the harshness of Chinese ancestral displacement. Lin's choreographic works as era-relevant social critiques and commentaries essentially respond to and interpret this social and historical vestige of redeployed Chinese-ness in Taiwan.

The United Nations' recognition of the PRC as the sole Chinese national representative in 1971 prompted the ROC's aspired assertion of a Taiwanese nation-state – a Sino-based sovereignty with a socio-political system and cultural characteristics distinct from the mainland Chinese. A “survival strategy” (Lin, 259) or a Taiwanese social awakening developed since that time of international political measures, this “re-vision” of a Taiwanese identity finds vigorous expressions in Lin's choreographic concepts and the Cloud Gate movements. It projects a Taiwanese-ness and placial history imparting Chinese, local indigenous and Other cultural-artistic lineages, as embodied in Lin's creative aesthetics and performed materials. The struggle through global politics and local integrity reassertions, as well as the reimagination of diasporic

Chinese-ness as an identity of Taiwan *roots* and character, remain eminent thematic notions in Lin's major works.

*Legacy*, choreographed in 1978 (Fig. 3), is Lin's signature piece on Taiwan's historical *roots* and identity issues – his “first theatrical work dealing with the history of Taiwan and its pioneers” (Taiwan Cloud Gate/Lin 1985, VHS production interview). It is pragmatically a visual debriefing of cultural deployment marked by a call to revitalize dispersed cultural *roots* and a group identity in the new home base. Lin's former training as a writer through the MFA (Writers' Workshop) program in the University of Iowa, his early dance practices spanning ballet, Graham, and Cunningham techniques when studying in the United States, and his artistic syntheses of the theatrical qualities of Beijing Opera, Chinese martial arts and meditation have co-created this critical work that pronounces a Taiwanese identity processed by Chinese migrant histories.

Positioned in a third space between his mainland Chinese ancestral *roots* and the diasporic home of Taiwan, Lin integrates his milieu-derived Chinese and Western cultural elements and artistic disciplines in the staging of *Legacy*. “Prologue,” structured around a Chinese incense burner placed at the downstage right corner, begins with the dancers walking solemnly toward the incense burner – with incense sticks held close to their chests in a gesture of ancestral respect. The scene, as concretely witnessed and understood by viewers, introduces an image of collective ritualistic tributes to one's cultural *roots* prior to departing for a new life in a new place. A third space (of initial fear and uncertainty) comes to my artistic-interpretive senses in the third episode of the work: “Crossing the Black Waters.” “Black waters” refers to The Strait of Taiwan between mainland China and the island of Taiwan – a dangerous mass of water (Lin, 77) where the Taiwan-bound Chinese migrants must have felt trapped and terrified when

crossing. The petrifying motions of bodies falling off into turbulent waves mimicked by a gigantic white canvas tossing and flapping across stage, the horrendous male efforts in pulling and safeguarding the falling bodies, and frantic female gazes upward for heavenly protection, at sequential or simultaneous timings, suggest a vulnerable and catastrophic experience of a dark, life-threatening space somewhere between the former home shore and the unknown destination. It allegorizes a harsh interstitial site of displacement preceding the migrants' final landing in the New Land named Taiwan, where migratory and emotional difficulties prevail afresh in the construct of a Taiwan Chinese-ness and its attached meaning of a "diasporic" national unity.

The work relays a succinct historical anecdote of a danced third space – a hybrid Taiwanese development through a tough though productive diasporic passage of an identity reassertion. The opening scene, dwelling on labouring Hakka <sup>22</sup> peasants in the field, delivers a visual testimony of a "third" and (culturally) "in-between" space" (Bhabha, 56) spawned within Taiwanese historicity and precipitating socio-political diversity as recapitulated earlier. Immersed in their individual auras of body-space interactions, the peasants present an array of concurrent movements registering a marriage of Chinese and Western dance traditions. As the bare-chested men with extended arms and ghostly, crooked fingers maintain their Chinese classical dance post of *archery stands*,<sup>23</sup> the women leap across stage with balletic splits and both

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<sup>22</sup> The Hakka, a Chinese subgroup from the southern Chinese coastal provinces of Fujian and Guangdong, are part of the earliest migrant settlers in Taiwan since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Together with the Hoklo/Han migrants from other Fujian regions, they become the collective "Taiwanese" (as distinguished from the Chinese mainlanders arriving with the exiled Nationalist Government between 1945 and 1949), constituting the majority (over 80%) of present-day Taiwan's Chinese population. (See Williams 2003; Lin 2004, 90.)

<sup>23</sup> A Chinese traditional dance post inspired by the motion of an archer. The post is portrayed with an open upper abdomen and sturdy hands mimicking arrow shooting, and a strong and balanced lower abdomen supported by a bent front leg (at a 90-degree-angle) and a straight, extended back leg.



hands stretching forth to mark their amply open Chinese operatic *tiger-mouth palms*<sup>24</sup> in midair. Stationing barely off stage centre are some muscular males with both fists lifted to join overhead in a pyramidal shape while the lower body executes a grounded arabesque;<sup>25</sup> as the fists descend from the head to the mid front of the body, the motion becomes a visible mimicry of a plough into the earth. Scattering upstage, a few other robust males rocket sporadically in a vertical leap with closed legs and outstretched hands in the air, landing in a forceful punch with bent turned out legs and wide open hands at shoulder level – a martial art posture of sustained strength and balance. Upon occasional grounding, the male movements rebound from a lower abdominal thrust to initiate a Graham-styled sidekick with a straight, elevated pointed foot, and an open, tilted upper body with both arms pulled upward in a V shape – as if making a plea to heaven about the surrounding lands. The interplays of diverse movements and techniques, performed individually and simultaneously, express a raw emotion of physical hardship and mental endurance.

A theatrical expression integrating modern and balletic physicality with Chinese classical and folk movements and martial arts, the scene exudes a developing Taiwanese-ness of corporeal and emotional intensity. The Chinese operatic male gesture of *tiger-mouth palms* is adopted by the leaping women through space in wide, extensive balletic splits, depicting a female progressive energy as strong as that of men in a time of migration struggles. The men's joint fists lifted overhead and dropping with the heaviness of an axe portray the pioneers' physical digging of the fields; the downward weight sensed, however, is slightly

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<sup>24</sup> A Chinese hand gesture derived from Beijing opera. It portrays the flexed palm(s) with extended and tightly closed fingers (from the index to baby) – characterized by a spatial gap between the thumb and index finger to suggest a wide open tiger mouth. The gesture normally depicts male strength and valour in both Chinese operatic and dance traditions.

<sup>25</sup> In classical ballet, arabesque is a position where the body is supported on one leg, with the other leg extended directly and lifted lightly behind the body. The standing leg can be straight or bent (in plié), but the back leg must always be straight (BalletHub: Ballet Terms Dictionary, web, 2018).

alleviated by the arabesque posture of the legs to suggest a lifted spirit upholding the loaded working male bodies. At that, Lin achieves the dual choreographic potency of using Western movement aesthetics to narrate and enhance a difficult Taiwan Chinese experience, and likewise the subtle sensation of “a lifted spirit” or “hope” through the choreographed male actions.

It is socio-culturally logical that Lin, a Chinese choreographer born into and creatively inspired by this diasporic third-space phenomenon of Taiwan, acculturates Chinese disciplinary traditions, Taiwanese experiences, and Other/Western performance artistries. On this note, artistic multiplicity and cultural integration materialize in the third space, where the choreographic process merges rooted Chinese and Taiwanese ingredients with Other artistic inspirations and techniques. The movement depictions in the scene relay exactly this Chinese diasporic dance distinctness, bridging a contemporary Taiwanese placial history of Other impacts with past Chinese *roots* at moments of cultural collisions and artistic interactions. Lin’s artistic stance between his Chinese ancestry and Taiwan-associated Otherness indicates “in-between-ness” as a yielding site, which enables him to interpret and support a Chinese cultural memory of an arduous Taiwanese socio-historical construct. More decidedly, it projects a choreographed Taiwanese identity that is non-essentialist Chinese, built between Chinese and Others, and unique in form via an intercultural dance re-enactment of that lived, or passed-on memory.

Lin confesses that the 1978 premiere of *Legacy* in Taiwan was difficult and emotional, as it occurred on the same evening when the United States announced its diplomatic relation with mainland China instead of Taiwan (Taiwan Cloud Gate 1985, VHS production interview). It was a double blow to Taiwan following the United Nations’ welcome of mainland China as the exclusive Chinese nation in 1971. Left with the feeling of neither a Chinese nor Taiwanese

sovereign authority due to world-power politics and influences, Taiwan faced an in-between status without international recognition. The creation of *Legacy* at the time became an artistic font of local reassurance and self-unification pronouncing Taiwanese-ness: the social consciousness of a “new” Chinese homeland, or an “imagined”<sup>26</sup> Chinese diasporic nation-state – built and earned on Taiwanese soil since the southern Chinese pioneers’ arrival. The choreographic impetus is prominent in “Pioneering the Wild” – the fourth episode that denotes a visual-vocal assertion of social stability and national reinforcement in overcoming Taiwan’s identity crisis and symbiotic international political setbacks of the era.

A “centrepiece” that articulates the thematic message of Chinese migration hardship and Taiwanese identity consolidation, “Pioneering the Wild” first captivates viewers with a prolonged, agonized yell from upstage right, where the male leader raises a huge white sail-like fabric over his head, standing atop the heaving shoulders of a surrounding crowd with outreached arms. The gestures indicating a destination reached through collaborative and unified efforts bring forth a troupe of male peasants in procession from upstage to downstage centre with accelerated jumps of outspread arms and legs in midair, landing forcefully with angular arms and widespread fingers clutching the floor. This energized modernist reflection of men’s desire to conquer the vast wilderness is further enhanced by an acrobatic male figure, who, the moment the troupe retreats off stage right and left, dashes out from upstage right to stage centre, and tumbles to his original entry spot in continuous backward somersaults typical in Chinese operatic battle scenes. The man then begins a travelling combination of a big

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<sup>26</sup> Political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson proposes “imagined communities” as a form of bordered and sovereign nations, in which fellow members cultivate a mental bondage and cultural affiliation without actually knowing one another (1991, 1). In this context, I concur that *Legacy* performs the “imagined” making of a Taiwanese nation with a strong sense of “community” – one always conceived as a “deep horizontal comradeship” (ibid, 6; see also Lin 2004, 118) in community living and rebuilding.

leap ahead imaging an arabesque posture in flight, and a grounded forward somersault toward the downstage left corner – a sequence subsequently repeated by the male peasant troupe in a linear formation moving along the same direction. The acrobatic balletic-Chinese operatic male travel of arabesque jumps and forward somersaults suggesting “high spirits” and “grounded labours” in living the Chinese diasporic site of Taiwan, however, does not convey the full message yet.

As the male peasant troupe travels offstage, a group of female peasants enters from upstage right as another linear formation. The women travel along the same diagonal route as the men, executing a different travelling combination of an initial leap with a modernist sidekick of the upstage (right) leg in midair, a forceful martial arts landing of wide open, turned out and bended knees slipping right onto the stage floor in a complete split, and a Chinese classical *swirling cloud* leg gesture in an anti-clockwise left-right leg flip over the upper abdomen while pressing their backs against the floor.<sup>27</sup> This last movement propels a lower abdominal thrust enabling the women’s rise from the floor to repeat the same combination in moving on. When leaping, the women’s hands are thrown high up in a V shape; when landing, the upstage (right) hands are raised straight up and the downstage (left) hands are horizontally stretched toward the audience at shoulder level – a typical Chinese traditional dance gesture of the hands termed the *wind-borne flag*. The female peasants’ excruciatingly difficult path as early Chinese settlers is illustrated through this most complicated travelling combination, in which the female leaps with the modernist high sidekicks are practically more gravity-defiant than the male arabesque leaps, hence more challenging to perform in midair. The transitional move of the women from full splits on the stage floor to the *swirling cloud* leg-flipping motion over the lower abdomen,

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<sup>27</sup> A traditional Chinese dance technique that alternates the skyward crossing of the two legs – the movement derived from the image aesthetics of superimposing swirling clouds is executed with the dancer’s upper back pressed against the floor for support.

moreover, proves a set of tough modernist-Chinese movement techniques demanding exceptional strength and physical stamina in female bodies. Female pioneering migrants' robust tenacity when facing migration adversities is visibly acute in the episode's movement depictions.

The strenuous travels of the men and women through adjoining ballet, modern dance, Chinese dance aesthetics and operatic techniques further illustrate the vibrancy of the third space. Lin's grounding of this in-between cultural space enables him to adopt and synthesize multiple East-West movements, concepts, and creative media that have crossed paths with Taiwanese history. Situated at midpoint between his Chinese heritage and Western artistic influences, Lin is able to present a visually and emotionally realistic theatrical recount of a Taiwan past and its Chinese builders. In that aspect, Lin's choreographic endeavour in the third space relates a social respect and empowerment for female roles involved in the migration story. The close to impossible physical execution of the women's travelling combination and embodied migratory strength is one concrete example – though incomplete without the punctuating appearance of an assumed “mother earth” figure danced by Lin Hsiu-wei (Lin 2004, 132), a stern and hefty female soloist capturing viewing spotlights in a succeeding segment.

Lin's statement of women's pioneering potency is boldly evident when, not long after the travelling female peasants' exit, a female character also in peasant clothing enters from the upstage left corner. The woman performs a series of Chinese operatic body-flipping spins with outstretched hands to each side of the body in the form of a tumbling yet sturdy cross. She makes an accentuated end to her spins at stage centre with a “holler” and an instantaneous raise of a dirt cloth with her right hand, posing like a flag frozen in time and space. Facing the audience, her gaze pierces through the watching eyes in determined and absolute power. Imbedded with a strong call for a national identity constructed away from the original Chinese

terra firma, this segment invokes my sense of a third-space mentality that strives to reaffirm a Chinese cultural status shaded or lost in between ancestral China and diasporic Taiwan. The PRC's regard of Taiwan as a "renegade island" (ibid, 18) to be reunited under mainland Chinese communist sovereignty has been a core Taiwanese anxiety existing through the island's initial Chinese nationalist and current multi-partied regimes. It is thus quite comprehensible that Lin, caught between sovereign politics of the ancestral Chinese nation and his (native) Taiwanese diaspora, seeks to re-identify and justify the solidarity of Taiwan as the new and reconstructed home country of a different Chinese socio-ideological structure.

In this situation, Lin's casting of the "mother earth" figure contains a dual signification. First, it demonstrates Lin's tribute to female nurturing power and internal perseverance in reinstating communal connectedness and unification during migratory and diasporic difficulties – a stark finesse to the strenuous female travelling combination just performed. Second, it amplifies the instigation and recognition of the land of Taiwan as the Chinese migrants' new and permanent dwelling place – a founded site of national unity through diasporic sweats and toils. On the latter, the "holler" represents the woman's call for social and communal bondage in the newly explored Chinese homeland. And that "holler" intensified by her punchy raise of a pioneer's dirt cloth after a series of tumultuous bodily spins plays the social call in acknowledging a new Chinese national identity constructed outside of mainland China – as symbolized by the woman's ending "flag-like" posture. I coin the scene a "theatrical vent" comparable with cultural and ethnographic theorist Adrienne Kaeppler's reference of the Tonga poetry of *lakalaka* as "a sung speech," or "the textual frame for interpreting history and politics of prestige and power" (Kaeppler 2006, 40). In my view, the strong and proactive mother-earth character is Lin's contemporary theatrical personification of female pioneering contributions

toward social and political integrity in the “rebuilding” of a Chinese home and identity on Taiwanese earth. The prestige and power of history making in this version, as Lin choreographically articulates in his third space between the ancestral Chinese culture and a reconfigured diasporic Taiwan Chinese-ness, offers an impartial insight that the event is not strictly a men’s deed but one shared and supported by socially committed women – especially at times of cultural deployments and pioneering challenges.

The polyphonic-multivocal affects (and effects) of different cultural and artistic crossings in the third/in-between space transform *Legacy* to a dance theatre of diverse Taiwanese historical antecedents. Framing *Legacy*’s theatrical axis is the rooted expressivity of Chinese drumming and *Nanjuan* – southern Chinese wind-and-string instruments brought to Taiwan by early Chinese migrants (Lin 2004, 109). Loud and torrential drumbeats performed live by the Ju Percussion Ensemble to accompany the episode of “Pioneering the Wild” re-enact the “death-defying spirit” (ibid, 131) and unremitting energy of the labouring pioneers. Composer-percussionist Ju Chong-ching admits that the ensemble needed to integrate Western drumming and Chinese martial arts techniques (ibid) in drawing vigorous and endless energy from the energy focal point at the lower mid abdomen known as *dantien*,<sup>28</sup> in order to aptly depict the pioneers’ experience of physical harshness and emotional turmoil.

Although *Legacy* is imbued with highly hybridized Chinese-Euro-American movements, *Nanjuan* music and ballads of southern Chinese origin interweaving through successive episodes deliver a distinct Taiwan Chinese-ness throughout the piece. “Prologue” and the opening scene

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<sup>28</sup> The Chinese physiological term for the focal point where energy is gathered and circulated to the rest of the body. Located in the lower abdomen below the navel, *dantien* is considered the main source of physical, mental, and spiritual energy in Chinese medicinal philosophy and bodily practice, from where *qi* (essential vitality) is generated to each muscle and bone of the different body parts and back to its original spot through a cultivated breathing technique of continuous inspiration and expiration. (See Yang and Li 2009, 195-199.)

are both performed to *Nanjuan*. Preceding the third episode “Crossing the Black Waters” is a recorded ballad in Hoklo (a Min-nan dialect meaning “Han”/mainstream Chinese) on the danger and hardship of Chinese ancestors crossing the Strait of Taiwan. The ballad is sung by a southern Taiwanese vocalist, Chen Da, whose vanishing local singing style with a hoarse and rustic projection is preserved on albums by European-educated Taiwanese ethnomusicologists (Lin 2010, 256). As well, “The Farmer’s Song” accompanying the seventh episode “Rice Planting” is a Hoklo tune (Lin 2004, 123).

Other than the choreographic-sonic presentation of mixed Taiwan Chinese and Western cruxes, of special note is the combination of East-West artistic media and symbols in narrating the Chinese diasporic struggle of Taiwan. Parenthetically, the first half of the production features Western creative minimalism in using the same white canvas depicting the lead sail on the black waters to depict a death shroud covering the body of a male pioneer in a later scene. The second half uses simply a long, extensive Chinese red fabric to mimic a stream of blood (a heritage continued) from a woman peasant in labour, and concludes with the joyous flipping of red Chinese ribbons and lion dancing at a harvest celebration in the final (eighth) episode of “Epilogue.” Creative-aesthetic choices like these implicate a third-space convergence between Chinese and Western artistic traditions, where Chinese-ness re-cultivated with a new, vernacular identification of a culturally diverse “Taiwanese-ness” is enabled and celebrated.

It is between Eastern and Western movement vocabularies, artistic disciplines and theatrical concepts, and fundamentally between cultural identities, geographies and political allegiances that Lin effectuates his choreographic meanings. The “third/in-between” space thus exists as a major creative pulse and inspirational source for Lin. Reflecting on Bhabha’s note of the space as the “cutting-edge of translation and negotiation” (2004, 56) in my study of *Legacy*, I see Lin



as the “translator” of Taiwanese (local) histories and social disruptions with contemporary (Western and global) dance texts and ideas, and the “negotiator” between Chinese ancestral and dispersed cultural *roots*, and between differing movement techniques and performance artistries of the Chinese self and influential Others. The translating and negotiating process is vital in choreographing a Taiwanese identity that demonstrates a Chinese diasporic, culturally fluid and diverse nature. The process edifies Lin as the legitimate and artistic “in-between” persona who connects contemporary audience with a Taiwanese past, communicating distinct Taiwan *roots* developed through multifaceted social and political issues in the Chinese ancestral land and beyond.

Analyzing *Legacy*’s creative impetus and contextual sources leads to my categorizing the production as a glocalized dance project. It is factually a local (Taiwanese) artistic response to global cultural-political implementations (started by the United Nations and the United States, as previously noted). A choreographic crystallization of Taiwan’s conflictive “Chinese” diasporic status in the 1970s and 80s, *Legacy* of glocalized features remain salient in terms of its global accessibility and dissemination. A dance example of “the local constituting the global” (see above, p. 28), the project created from local Taiwanese socio-historical specificities and diasporic experiences is recorded by internationally accredited Labanotation<sup>29</sup> for Western or global examination and restaging. The Utah Repertory Dance Company, the dance departments of Ohio State University, University of Minnesota and the State University of New York-Purchase in the United States, The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, and the dance departments of Perth Universities in Perth, Australia (Lin 2004, 117), among others, are some of

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<sup>29</sup> A dance notation system derived from the work of European modern dance pioneer-theorist Rudolf von Laban and further developed by American dance researcher Ann Hutchinson Guest. It records and analyzes human movements and dance forms via graphic symbols, path mapping, numerical systems, and letter and word notations. (See also Hutchinson Guest 1977, 164-170.)

the major institutions and companies around the world that have studied and performed the piece. *Legacy* as Lin's choreographic endeavour in addressing local Taiwanese "identity" concerns and unsettled Chinese questions hence convenes conscious impressions and resonances ranging from local to global dance educators, artists and viewers. I surmise these merging effects of local domestic substantives and strategic global receptivity as a critical phase of glocalization processed in a universal third space between global and local cultural-artistic and epistemic practices. Such effects ensure Lin's choreographic message to both native Taiwanese and international audiences: the persistent Chinese diasporic construct and placial unification suggesting a resilient and thriving Taiwanese (imaginably national) identity.

"I am the 7<sup>th</sup> generation of Chinese immigrants in Taiwan. I grew up in a multicultural environment of Chinese, Taiwanese aboriginals, Japanese and Americans" (Lin and Moritz 2006, DVD production interview). I observe that Taiwan's multicultural environment fosters Lin's creative third space in between cultures, attributing both cultural and artistic hybridizations in his works. Much of Lin's choreographic manifestations suggest a socio-cultural re-contextualization of a rooted Chinese heritage and a diverse Taiwanese representation. *Nine Songs* produced in 1993 (Fig. 4), another of Lin's world-renowned pieces, is an example of this. The work draws its narrative frame from a collection of ancient Chinese poems of the same title written in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century (300–201BC) – the warring states period in China. Chu Yuan, a highly respected statesman and poet wrongfully accused of treason, wrote the collection when in exile in a wilderness swamped with lakes and rivers to the south of his emperor's territory/the Ch'u State (Wang 1988, 77).

According to literary scholar Wang Si-yuan, *Nine Songs* is a series adapting ritual verses used by shamans as ceremonial-sacrificial hymns, and the title "*Nine Songs*" (meaning "many

verses” in the Chinese language) consists of eleven poems. Each of the nine poems is dedicated to a specific Ch’u deity who, through the shaman’s sacrificial intercession as the deity’s propitiating lover, is invited down to earth to be worshipped by the locals. Beneath the literary homage to nature and deities and the depicted romances between humans and celestials lies the poet’s critique of authorities, comparing state rulers to the gods who either have not shown or leave too fast, lacking sincere attention for their loyal people (ibid; Huang 2014, 363). *Nine Songs* as a Cloud Gate dance adaptation evokes my re-imagination of Lin the choreographer as the double of Chu the poet on a different place-time plane. Creating in his third space between East-West cultural and movement-music aesthetics, Lin connects the Taiwanese social contemporaneity with a Chinese past in his poignant social criticism of tyrannical governances marring 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese history.

The sonic and symbolic imageries of the choreography reflect the tortuous social and historical conditions enfolded in Lin’s social critique. From my “artist-researcher” perspective, they manifest a choreographic sanction of intersected cultures and performing artistries acquired from a Taiwanese third space. A fixed stage set located in the orchestra pit, the live lotus pond floats serenely against a running-brook soundscape, reiterating the Chinese Buddhist life cycle of “death and rebirth” (Huang, 375). The respective budding, blossoming, withering and re-budding of lotuses through the four seasons attesting to the cosmic continuation of life, and the sound and image of water symbolizing the purification of all souls, form the thematic motifs of revitalizing the living and honouring the martyrs’ undying spirits in Chinese socio-political tragedies of the past century. Indubitably, Lin’s interpretation of *Nine Songs* is a dance reflection of a classic Chinese literary epic – with a floating-lotus imagery that endorses a traditional Chinese spiritual aesthetic of life’s perpetuation. However, choreographing in a third

space between ancestral China and native Taiwan, Lin chooses Taiwanese indigenous and Other/East Asian music to present the work. I read the approach as Lin's spontaneous and respectful retrieval of his Chinese roots in dance making, and a simultaneous strategic engagement of local Taiwanese indigenusness and East Asian Otherness in claiming a unique cultural embodiment of diverse Taiwanese-ness. The artistic indicator that the choreography is rightfully a Taiwanese version of the Chinese literary classic all but accelerates identity sophistication as expressed through *Legacy* created five years earlier.

In assessing Lin's *Nine Songs* as another choreography of third-space and local-global characteristics, I will first examine the inter-connected musical, movement, and metaphorical essences that underpin its major dance scenes. While creating the work, Lin went for days into the mountains to select/record music and songs of the Taiwanese aborigines, believing that their tribal rhythms and tonal qualities dispel the exact ritualistic rusticity intended for his various choreographic segments (Lin 2006, DVD production interview). As an attentive audience member,<sup>30</sup> I realize that the aboriginal music components contribute significant enhancement of the work's images, and that the corporeal and symbolic elements of the different scenes with their musical accompaniments illustrate a thematic synthesis transcending Taiwanese local histories, power and identity politics.

For example, in the first dance scene "Greeting the Gods," it is a Tsou aboriginal tribal song that accompanies the celebrants in long white robes as they proceed to the lotus pond for a purification ceremony.<sup>31</sup> Seemingly absorbed in the tribal melodious continuation of trance-like,

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<sup>30</sup> The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre was on North American tour with *Songs of the Wanderer* and *Nine Songs* during the late 1990s. It was my first viewing of the company's live performance in Toronto's O'Keefe Centre (now The Sony Centre for the Performing Arts).

<sup>31</sup> The Tsou and Puyumn are two of the nine major aboriginal tribes living along the eastern coast and in the central mountainous area of Taiwan. They are the earliest inhabitants of Taiwan, and each tribe has their own distinct language and cultural characteristics. Although more or less influenced by the Han Chinese descendants of Taiwan today, they maintain a comparatively traditional lifestyle, with which dance and music still constitute an important part of their festivals and ceremonies. (Yenzhen 1993, 95)

mythical notes, the celebrants gather as a seated communal circle at stage centre, beating long bamboo canes on the floor to invoke their deities. Choreographer Lin acknowledges that the Tsou ritual song used in this scene is truly a ceremonial composition of the Tsou tribe to welcome their deities (Huang, 364). Its atmospheric solemnity delivers the dual function of maintaining the austere poetics of ancient shamanistic rituals and setting the reverent mood of the first poem “Monarch of the East” in the second dance scene. The opening Tsou ceremonial song hence serves as a meditative and religious lede/debut that contrasts effectively with the augmenting sacrificial intensity of the shaman’s dance with the Sun God in the second scene. As the shaman’s violently shaking body inscribed with percussive “Graham contraction technique” (Lin 2012, 149) invites the god in his fiercely majestic sun mask to earth, the two perform a licentious duet – “a rite of fertility” (Huang, 366) that assures the revival of earthly lives. The spiritual calming of the Tsou ceremonial overture, when fading out for the frantic and sensual duet entry, magnifies in effect the Sun God’s threatening and ruthless imperial image contrary to Chu Yuan’s poetic version of a satisfied and restful celestial power (ibid, 366), let alone the shaman’s onerous physical and emotional exertions in her sacrificial dance with the god for the continuity of her people.

A woman’s festival chant of the Puyum tribe (ibid, 376; cf. Footnote 31), a different Taiwanese aboriginal song, opens the third poem/the fourth dance scene “Goddess of the Hsiang River.” In the poem, the Goddess has not responded to the shaman’s sacrificial call, but spends her time thinking of the River God. In the dance scene, the serene, prolonged, and high-pitched chant echoing a traditional processional hymn befits the aloof elegance of the River Goddess – a “princess” figure covered with a trail of white, watery silk, borne high upon two bamboo poles by her attendants. The detached monophonic chant resonates with indifference and a chilling

emptiness seeping through the ornately masked goddess in procession. In projecting a somewhat cold and remote celestial stature, the chant enacts a crescendo highlight for the subsequent depiction of a “human-like” goddess, whose emotional obsession with her missed River God overrides caring for needy worshippers. It plays the crucial audio-psychical lure to the climax of the scene as the shaman intrudes to rip off the goddess’ mask, exposing a saddened womanly face of *butoh* whiteness<sup>32</sup> – a chalky and opaque makeup symbolic of a “living” mask. The mask-ripping gesture is a choreographic addition to the original poem (ibid, 368), which I observe as Lin’s purposeful extension of the ancient literary classic in relaying the often masked issues of contemporary authoritative insincerity and disconcertion toward their civilian subjects. I regard this creative pragmatism as intelligently primed by the Puyum female singing – an initial sonic association of the female deity’s distant, concealed inner world that, as the scene proceeds, unsheathes as one presenting the human flaws of self-centredness and emotional vulnerability.

The Tsou ceremonial song that begins the dance also closes its last (the twelfth) scene depicting the eleventh poem “Honouring the Dead.” Its solemn and ritualistic sonic aura accompanies the dancers’ individual entries to place lit candles on the stage floor, creating a river of flickering lights stretching from the lotus pond to the dark, distant backdrop suggestive of a mystic, near-sacred infiniteness. I examine this finale image as affectively contained and crested by the recurring Tsou ceremonial song, which dissipates a boundless sense of spiritual healing

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<sup>32</sup> The white plaster makeup on the *butoh* dancing body is a post-WW II Japanese dance theatrical characteristic applied by *butoh* founders Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno. An aesthetic representation of the “fictional body” with the performing focus of removing the self to become other forms (aliens, humans or deities, plants or animals, or affective phenomenal personifications), it also suggests a “living mask” that renders the performer’s innate self “invisible” on the *butoh* dance stage. (See Barrett et al 2004, 65-7.) Lin’s usage of “white” facial makeup of the goddess inspires a critical extension from this *butoh* symbol in my analysis of the scene and relevant meaning.

that subdues and disintegrates feelings of violence and despair spilling from the preceding (eleventh) scene “Homage to the Fallen” – the tenth poem dedicated to soldiers who died for their country.

In the “Homage” scene, Lin choreographically replaces Chu Yuan’s literary dramatization of dying Ch’u warriors and horsemen battling through storms of arrows with visual narrations of political martyrs sacrificing their lives during Chinese historical massacres. His metaphoric critique and resistance against totalitarian sovereignties and socio-political divisions are concretely pronounced, for instance, in the victims’ stride to their execution site with tied hands and head-covering baskets suggesting the February 28 Incident of Taiwan,<sup>33</sup> and the defiant young man standing in front of an advancing military tank symbolized by two parallel menacing upstage lights – a performed representation of Beijing’s June 4/Tiananmen Incident.<sup>34</sup> In coping with these devastating stories and images of Chinese and Taiwanese memories, there seems to be no other more suited consolatory artistic remedy than the Tsou ceremonial sonic penetration through that endless candle-lit path in the closing scene. Its deep and religious murmur helps conceive a peaceful, sacred commemorative psalm honouring the living souls of the dead, and a spiritual pilgrimage ploughed through painful and damaging histories toward a future of hopes and social renewals.

Lin’s choreographed music-image symbolism of *Nine Songs* also features Other Asian sources, which provide meaningful threads to Taiwanese socio-historical experiences and the choreographer’s constructive fascinations with Other Asian artistic and spiritual impacts. A

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<sup>33</sup> A political clash between the local population and the newly arrived Nationalist Government troops withdrawing from the communist state of China in 1949, causing uncalculated deaths of Taiwanese elite and civilian opponents. (See also Huang 2011, 371.)

<sup>34</sup> A mega-scale democracy driven student protest in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square in 1989, resulting in military massacres, massive arrests and persecutions of mainland Chinese student protestors and political leaders. (See also Lin 2012, 150.)

major example is “The God of Clouds” – the seventh poem performed in the fifth dance scene to the traditional Japanese court music of *Gagaku*.<sup>35</sup> Throughout the scene, the flamboyant yet fear-provoking masked deity executes Chinese operatic gestures and movements reminiscent of a powerful warlord on the shoulders of two struggling male bearers. Interpreted by the aesthetically static, sustained, unemotional, and dignified *Gagaku* composed with the characteristic instruments of various shos (mouth organs), hichiriki and ryuteki (double reed and transverse flutes), and biwas (lutes) punctuated at dramatic intervals by the kakko and/or shoko (hour-glass drum and/or bronze gong), the deity’s presence feels like a cold, formal, and oppressive power when moving/travelling upon his clouds played by bare human shoulders. I am inclined to link this music-image combination to past Japanese colonial influence on Taiwan (between 1895 and 1945, as stated at the beginning of Part II). In my intuitive analysis, Lin’s choreographic depiction of this deity glancing down on the Ch’u state as he soars “swiftly” through the clouds to awe-inducing *Gagaku* notes poses a vivid metaphoric relevance to the brief Japanese colonial era. The cultural-artistic influence of the Japanese colonizers, as I reflect, might have inspired Lin’s engagement of Japanese imperial sonic traditions in constructing the petrifying, unreachable, and oppressive passing-by of the God of Clouds – a personified embodiment of the relatively short-spanned Japanese colonial sovereignty over Taiwan.

Asian music and sonic enhancements of *Nine Songs*’ textual meanings are also evident in “Gods of Fate” – the fifth and sixth poems performed in the third dance scene to Tibetan monk chanting, the second half of “Goddess of the River Hsiang” performed to Indonesian gamelan

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<sup>35</sup> Japanese imperial court music evolved from Chinese and Korean court music between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. The music is traditionally performed for Japanese royalty during ritualistic ceremonies. Its long, sustained, and meditative tones composed with woodwind, string and percussive instruments including *sho* (mouth organ), *hichiriki* (double reed flute), *ryuteki* (transverse flute), *biwa* (lute), *kakko* (small hour-glass shaped drum), *taiko* (large standing drum), and *shoko* (bronze gong) are meant to convey an aura of awe, dignity, and mystery around court members and families. Over time, the music imbued with a reverential quality assumes sacred respect from the Japanese people (Ortolani 1995, 40-43; Garfias 1960, 16-19).



music, and “Mountain Spirit” – the ninth poem performed in the sixth dance scene to Indian flute refrain. In the “Gods of Fate” scene, the low and looming Tibetan sonic prevalence creates a haunting and chilling sensation around the Tibetan-Lama interpolation of a “fated” humanity. The notion is particularly lucid as the dancers’ bodily movements submit to the molding of movement initiatives or instructive gestures from the two ruthless gods in gaudily disturbing masks – a corporeal derivation from the American aesthetic of Contact Improvisation<sup>36</sup> that seamlessly articulates the Tibetan sonic implication of an eerily vulnerable life pattern. In the “Goddess” scene, the female deity’s slow and pensive movements to the monotonously blended gamelan tunes and timbres reflect “the introverted, inner world of a lonely maiden” (Lin 2012, 149) indifferent to her worshippers’ ritualistic offers/bequests, whereas in the “Mountain Spirit” scene, the poetic narrative of a shy and friendly mountain deity gathering herbs and mingling with leopards and civets (Waley 1973, 53; Wang, 369) is choreographically “re-presented” as a hyper-alert and frightened spirit creeping and prancing around the bare dark stage to a chain of mysterious, unsettling, and open-ended Indian flute notes.

I consider the “Mountain Spirit” scene a sonically expressive and instinctive embodiment in prophesying the disastrous historical cases referenced in the subsequent scene of “Homage to the Fallen” as studied earlier. The mountain spirit is the only deity in Lin’s choreography that does not dance with a mask but a pale, tortured face showing a wide open mouth. From a visual-emotional aesthetic perspective, the facial expression inspired by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch’s famed painting *The Scream*<sup>37</sup> denotes Lin’s choreographic suggestion of an

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<sup>36</sup> A postmodern dance improvisation between two or more interactive bodies developed by Steve Paxton in the United States in the 1970s. Its principle of subjecting weight and momentum to natural gravity and spontaneous motion as the dancers interact characterizes physical reflexes, bodily experiences and responsiveness rather than mindfully manipulated movements. The organic process renders every push, tug, kick, or lift occurring between the dancing partners as continually moulded by one another’s movement initiatives (Novak 1990, 152; Lepkoff 2000, 62). Lin’s influence by the form is evident in the Gods’ gestural commands and the human participants’ corporeal responses in this specific scene. I trace a convincing logic in that Lin was pursuing his graduate studies and dance training in the United States in the 1970s – just as Contact Improvisation was emerging.

inexplicable threatening state, a doomed unknown beyond words – all quite psychically telling with the lingering, restless Indian flute sensation that accompanies the spirit's every move.

As apparent in all scenes examined, Lin, in choreographically adapting from the ancient Chinese literary classic of *Nine Songs*, embraces Chinese traditional movements and also post-modern Euro-American dance and visual arts inspirations. Not only that, he chooses an array of Taiwanese aboriginal and East Asian musical entities over Chinese instrumental accompaniments in staging the work. I regard Lin's choice as a valid and characteristic manifestation of a third-space identity located between his Chinese *roots* and Other domestically and externally influential cultures in a socio-historically complex place as Taiwan. On this premise, I agree with dance and performance studies scholar Yin-ying Huang that it is Lin's choreographic strategy to present *Nine Songs* as a Taiwanese version of the original Chinese classical poetic collection (Huang, 376). The work aptly recaps Bhabha's concept of cultural identity as not solely a biological factor but shaped by one's socio-cultural history and experiences (ibid, 377). The process indicates Taiwanese-ness as the interstitial sign of inherent political and social hybridization – a Chinese culture “appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (Bhabha, 55). Though illustrative of a core linkage with Chinese *roots*, *Nine Songs* spells out a distinct Taiwanese identity shaped by diverse local indigenous cultures and enriched by Western and Asian artistic experiences. In my view, traditional Chinese images and movements interfused with Other music-and-dance forms are crucial reflections of Lin's creative position located between his Chinese heritage and the different cultures in contact beyond the Chinese ancestral ground – in that dynamic third/culturally intersected space of Taiwanese

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<sup>37</sup> In his interview with Taiwanese dance and performance studies scholar Huang Yin-ying on the *Mountain Spirit* dance, choreographer Lin Hwai-min explained that he asked Cloud Gate dancer Wen-long Li to study Norwegian painter Edvard Munch's work *The Scream* in portraying a frightened, open-mouthed spirit that foresees terrible events about to happen (Huang 2012, 370).

attributions.

In living a Taiwanese history of ancestral Chinese-ness and a placial state of cultural and artistic pluralities, Lin has created a dance production of “glocal” features (cf. Footnote 6) based on his Chinese heritage and departure from it. His choreographic integration of locally vibrant Taiwanese aboriginal songs and music, Japanese imperial music traditions, coupled with his creative engagement of American modern dance technique, European painting expression, and the Asian musical aesthetics of Indian, Tibetan and Indonesian – all signify a cultural-artistic extension beyond Chinese *roots*. In this scenario, Lin’s reinterpretation of the Chinese classical text of *Nine Songs* reflects a glocalized approach of processing locally distinct (Taiwanese) stories with global cultural inspirations and Other art forms. The choreographic implication of Chinese-ness as a rooted component and also a part of Taiwan’s socio-cultural diversity asserts a contemporary Taiwanese representation constructed upon local historical events and global/international artistic experiences. Lin’s realization of the work, in practice, manifests a local-global collaboration of a reinvented Chinese existence – an innately hybrid Chinese identity unique to the Taiwanese poly political and cultural society of Chinese diaspora bearing.

A fluid and diverse contemporary Taiwanese identity negotiated in a third space between Chinese heritage, Taiwanese indigenous cultures, and the politically and/or artistically affecting Other cultures over the course of Taiwan’s social history, for all that, can be symbolically linked with the recurring figure of a modern-day male traveller dropping in and out of the various ritualistic dance scenes. Unlike the shaman who frequents and participates in the god-propitiating ceremonies as described in Chu Yuan’s poetry, the traveller is a choreographic invention of Lin. The first to appear in the opening scene “Greeting the Gods,” he reappears in “Gods of Fate” and other scenes throughout the dance. Dressed in a black Western suit and hat,

walking slowly with a suitcase, at one time holding an umbrella, at another riding a bicycle, he passes by briefly during or in between the scenes like a distant and collected observer.

Existing scholarly research reveals the traveller as choreographer Lin's self-insertion (Huang, 374), and a personified representation of Lin's Asian travels during the Cloud Gate hiatus period from 1988-1991 – the journey that inspired his choreography of *Nine Songs* (Lin 2012, 147). In my evaluation, this character threading the entire dance and guiding the audience to another place and time (ibid, 150) is a critical third-space/in between sojourner. Invented as the contemporary “protagonist” of *Nine Songs* (Chang, 1993), he signifies a physical-mental connection of Chinese historical *roots* with a Taiwanese social existentiality, and local/place-specific social narratives with global cultural-artistic receptivity. His travelled space between ancient Chinese shamanistic rituals depicted in Chu Yuan's poetic verses and a Taiwanese socio-diasporic modernity implicates a personal journey across and between Chinese, Taiwanese and Other cultures on the dance stage. I associate this travelled space with Bhabha's third space and cultural in-between-ness (2004, 56), which I see as critically mobile amid post-colonial cultural dynamics and the diasporic impacts of Otherness. It symbolizes a spatial median that bridges past Chinese events with present Taiwanese/Chinese diasporic living, registering a fluid geo-cultural juncture potent in the linking and merging of historical episodes, traditional Chinese, Asian, and contemporary Western artstries relevant to the Taiwanese social evolution and the choreographer's creative experiences.

Considering ethnographic theorist James Clifford's analysis of “cultures as ‘sites’ traversed” by migrants, traditions, Western commodities and social media, and of a traveller's “hybrid identity” developed from the (geographic) places and (cultural) spaces travelled (1997, 102-103), I perceive that the third/travelled space of diverse cultural and artistic crossroads

in Lin's *Nine Songs* manifests similar characteristics. Indicative of Taiwanese-ness as a diasporic culture reconstructed and negotiated among Chinese migrants, Taiwan indigenous and Other/Western traditions, it verifies a contemporary Taiwanese identity of multiple cultural traits, of artistic as well as socio-political mobility. More significantly, it nurtures the fluid stemming of a new, culturally mixed Chinese diasporic solidarity distinct from the Chinese ancestral nation of an essential, unanimous Chinese heritage. This particular space mapped between Chinese historical *roots* and Taiwanese construction functions as a cultural medium of coping with the past for Lin the Taiwan-born Chinese choreographer, and for the witnessing Taiwanese audience of Chinese descent. In my choreographic perspective, the travelled space is an alternate third space that facilitates a critical following of the traveller's footprints in identifying a culturally complex and socially politicized Taiwanese existence. It marks Lin's choreographic agency of historical connections and social reassurance in addressing Chinese ancestral relocation, enabling the reimagination and reinvention of a placial identity from rooted Chinese and diverse cultural and socio-political attributes in the Chinese diaspora of Taiwan.

The sensorial epitome of a cultural-artistic identity processed in the third space is doubly potent as the exploration of music affects and symbolic images continues with *Cursive II*<sup>38</sup> (2003) (Fig. 5) – Lin's dance creation inspired by Chinese calligraphic art and tradition. The piece is his second sequel of a cursive trilogy produced between 2001 and 2005, and a masterly integration of rooted-traditional Chinese movement concepts and disciplines with the

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<sup>38</sup> Choreographer Lin Hwai-min changed the title of *Cursive II* to *Pine Smoke* in 2012. The new title is derived from an ancient (Han dynasty/206 BCE – 220 CE) method of burning pine wood for smoke residues that produce a type of instantly dissolvable black calligraphic ink. The ink effects of light and darkness and interflowing (dark, grey, and translucent) tones on rice paper, according to Lin, more aptly suggest the dancing bodies' portrayal of fluid/changeable breathing and corporeal energies during calligraphy making. (Translated from the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre website: *Pine Smoke*, web, 05/31/2018.)

contemporary music aesthetics of American composer John Cage.<sup>39</sup> Unlike the relatively distinguishable cultural and artistic influences in *Nine Songs*, or more so *Legacy* as reviewed, *Cursive II* maintains a unified wholeness that dissolves typical cultural edges and artistic distinctness of third-space dance repertoires created between differing and intersecting cultures.

In this work, Lin's choreographic perception of calligraphy as "the traces of energy left by the masters when they dance with brushes on paper," and the Cloud Gate interpretation of that energy "felt, absorbed and transformed into dance movements with an emphasis on breathing" (*Cursive II* Program Notes 2006), is sensed and portrayed through the "immense space" and "layers of endless flowing breath" of Cage's music (Lin 2006, DVD production interview). Lin's dance and Cage's music, when presented together onstage, suffuse an intriguing harmony of East-West artistic choices and cultural depths that characterize *Cursive II*. The harmonic fusion is not coincidental, but illuminates the Lin-Cage creative bases affected and shaped by a third/in-between space connecting cultures and traditions of the East and West – an acquired innate condition related to both artists' common spiritual stances and artistic vibes.

Lin, a dedicated Buddhist, is also a practitioner of Taoist-derived Zen aesthetics in many of his acclaimed works. Meanwhile, Cage's Zen Buddhist devotion and his honour of the Taoist observation of the "Way" of nature in a metamorphic universe (Simpkins 1999, 14-15) exert far reaching Eastern influences on his Western compositional explorations. These shared spiritual-philosophical experiences mobilize the binding and complementing energies transmitted through the individual artists' creations – in the potent third (cultural) space of artistic-aesthetic

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<sup>39</sup> Creatively immersed in musical symbols and sonic abstractions inspired by Zen Buddhist concepts, American avant-garde composer John Cage (1912-1992) produced nonpareil works regarded by 20<sup>th</sup> century music critics as masterpieces engulfing "East in the West" (Patterson 1996, 53). On this note, the Cageian music aesthetics provide the perfect soundscape for the "Eastern bodily aesthetics" (Lin 2010, 258) of *Cursive II* based on Asian traditions and bodily practices e.g. taichi, martial arts, and yoga.

intersection and integration. In that light, Lin's *Cursive II* animates energies constantly reciprocated and regenerated between the traditional Chinese movement philosophy of calligraphy making and a modern American music invention of equivalent spiritual calls and creative fluidity. Cage's musical patterns, on the other hand, uphold artistic transformations and inventiveness between Western aural abstractions and Asian Zen Buddhist notions. "Listening to Cage's music makes me feel that he's half Asian" (Lin, DVD production interview). Lin's remark at the making of *Cursive II* divulges the two artists' intrinsic third-space moments – when East-West cultural-artistic forms and common spiritual-philosophical insights absorb, enhance and dissolve into one another in an interstitial site, producing the embodied and percussive energies that make Cage sounds Asian, and Lin's Taiwan Chinese-ness a choreographic attunement with Cage's American music innovation.

Positioned between eminent Eastern and Western cultures and spiritual ties, Lin devises for *Cursive II* a blended strain of taichi daoyin<sup>40</sup> (breath-guided meditative movements), martial arts,

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<sup>40</sup> Mainland Chinese immigrant and martial artist Hsiung Wei developed *taichi daoyin* in Taiwan in the 1970s. It incorporates the Taoist philosophy of *taichi quan* (shadow boxing), meditation, and *qigong* – a practice based on the physical principle of inhalation-exhalation that navigates the circulation of *qi* (breath or vital force within the body). (See *Advanced Taichi Daoyin* 2005, 37, 116, 146.) According to Hsiung, the *taichi daoyin* movement exercises annul the idea of attack in *taichi quan* and add the concepts of *dao* and *yin* (both mean "guide" in Chinese), stressing channeling of the breath in guiding the body. *Taichi daoyin* is based on the notion of the three-dimensional spiraling movement that reflects the curving line between the yin and yang belts in the taichi symbol – a signification of dynamic interactions between yin (soft and subtle) and yang (strong and solid) forces. The two small dots in each belt indicate that yin contains the seed of yang, and yang contains the seed of yin, symbolizing the limitless mutual reinforcements between the two states. In practicing *taichi daoyin*, the three-dimensional spiraling movement contour takes after the figure "8" – where the continuous flow of *qi* enables each affected muscle or bone tissue to achieve flexibility of the whole body (42). Such physical flexibility interpreted as *you* (being) may eventuate spiritual flexibility/freedom interpreted as *wu* (non being). According to Taoist philosopher Lao Tzu, *you* and *wu* are interdependent and grow out of one another. In this manner, the universe exists in maintaining equilibrium with nature, or alignment with Tao – the Way (of life) (113, 116-7). *Taichi Daoyin* is capable of boundless variety through the bodily application of just its basic principle of motion (Hsiung 2002, 3). Through years of training with Hsiung, the Cloud Gate dancers have developed a stylistic uniqueness that combines physical, mental, and spiritual capacities, exploring a full range of movement qualities from meditative stillness to thundering energy (2005, iv-vi). *The Cursive Trilogy* – particularly *Cursive II* as discussed in this segment, richly exemplifies the *taichi daoyin* method of concentration and meditation through movements – the body-mind integration prompting true technique (the state of *you/being*) with an inner attitude (of *wu/non being*). In ridding excessive concerns with movement rules and external affects, Lin mentors his Cloud Gate performers in becoming readily and fully adaptable to integrations of diverse movement and aesthetic vocabularies. In evoking the essence and energy flow of taichi while omitting its recognizable poses, *taichi daoyin* expert Hsiung enables the Cloud Gate dancing bodies to navigate flexibly through multiple aesthetic

and Graham-Cunningham modern dance techniques<sup>41</sup> that articulate Chinese calligraphic wisdom and practice, revealing a vigorous Taiwan cosmopolitan consciousness of Western/American influences. Similarly Cage, a compositional icon of “East in the West” (Patterson, 53), engages Chinese Taoist-Zen Buddhist<sup>42</sup> inspirations in producing an insurmountable American contemporary music-and-sound sophistication. Cage employs the mathematical probability of *I Ching* (a classic Chinese Taoist text on changing events) in his *Number Pieces*<sup>43</sup> – a music-sound sequence arranged through a computer system called TBrack (Haskins 2004, 47). The creative-scientific approach informed by Taoist-Zen philosophies lends the compositional outcome of “indeterminacy” and “chance” reflective of life’s changing, fortuitous and adaptive qualities governed by “certain immutable law” of the universe (Jenkins

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practices, including martial arts trained under master Adam Chi Hsu, and the study of calligraphy writing with Chinese art scholar and calligrapher Huang Wei-chung (Szeto 2010, 420-1, 425, 430).

<sup>41</sup> During his master studies at the Writers’ Workshop of the University of Iowa in the 1970s, Lin received his modern dance training in the studios of Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham in New York City. The training enabled his integration of Graham and Cunningham movement techniques with Chinese traditional and Euro-American ballet movements in the contemporary Taiwanese repertory of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, which he founded in Taipei in 1973.

<sup>42</sup> Chinese Taoist and Zen Buddhist concepts present an interconnected philosophy in spirit and practice. As Buddhism spread from India to China, and later Japan, it intermingled with the idea of Taoism and became a distinct version of Buddhism known as Zen (Suzuki 1996, 189-271). Inspired by the Chinese Taoist acumen of *wu* (not-being – the absence of perceptible qualities) in generative interactions with *you* (being – tangible states or concretely felt and lived situations), Zen master Hui-neng developed *wu-nian* (no-thought-ness – freeing the mind from worldly attachments and external distractions). The notion that an emptied and vacant mind facilitates a spontaneous insight into the absolute nature of the universe, or the stage of Buddhahood, is central to Zen Buddhist doctrines (Tseng 1987, 136; Suzuki, 255). In *Cursive II*, Lin materializes extensive Zen Buddhist ideas through Cloud Gate bodily and John Cage’s music aesthetics. I observe that Lin, influenced by the Taoist concept of *wu* and the Zen addendum of *wu-nian* (Szeto, 428-429), actualizes the master calligrapher’s free mental state and breath-enhanced corporeal energy flows that instigate the brush strokes’ every motion and momentum at calligraphy making.

<sup>43</sup> The Number Pieces, named after the number of performers in each piece, are composed with the time bracket technique producing short fragments of usually one, or at times two to a few notes within the indicated start-and-end times in minutes or seconds. Another number is added to the pieces as a superscript when “a particular number of performers is used ‘again’ in the series” (see Pritchett 1993, 199). Time brackets are time durations that can be fixed (1’15”-2’00”) or flexible (from anywhere between 1’15” and 1’45”, and to anywhere from 2’00” to 2’30”). While the fixed version specifies insertions of lengthy silences or short pauses in between bracketed time durations, the flexible version allows for intuitive, improvising and intersecting connections of instrumental or percussive performances somewhere between the start and end points of bracketed time durations, featuring “indeterminacy” and “chance” as essential components of the compositional pattern. (See Haskins 2004, 47; Popoff 2010, 65-84; Jenkins 2002, 240.) Lin’s choice of Cage’s recorded Number Pieces as *Cursive II*’s accompaniments include *Ryoanji* (1983-4), *Five*<sup>1</sup> and *Five*<sup>2</sup> (1988), *Five*<sup>3</sup> and *Five*<sup>4</sup> (1991), *Sixty-Eight* and *Seventy-Four for Orchestra* (1992) (*Cursive II* Program Notes, DVD/2006).



2002, 240; Govinda 1981, xiv). Both immersed in a creative space denoting a third and fluid dimension between the East (traditional Asian-ness) and West (contemporary American-ness), Lin and Cage engage with each other's art forms without gaps.

Honouring individual and/or mixing sonic expressions of woodwind, strings, piano and percussive notes (Popoff 2011, 220-229), Cage's exploration of chances and possibilities leads to a combination of prepared and improvised sounds, a variety of timbre, or a "musical gamut" with a fixed set of various sounds that form the entire pitch material of a composition (Haskins 2012, 130). Without conforming to existing music notes and sound arrangements, Lin's dancers in their meditative and improvising mindsets respond to and interact with the sweeping energy and breath flows under Cage's timbre spells – an unusual sonic trail interposed with arresting silences or indefinite stillness. Somehow, in that third dimension existing between Eastern and Western cultural aesthetics on spiritual common grounds, the Cloud Gate dancers manage to begin with the Cageian accompaniment, breathe through it, and finish with it in unison – all within an ever changing and impalpable Cageian tonal atmosphere.

Lin acknowledges that *Cursive II* was initially inspired by the lyrical grey tones flowing amid the blackness of calligraphic ink and the blankness of white rice paper<sup>44</sup> as the calligraphic characters/brush strokes are dabbed or shaped. For lighting and backdrop designs, Lin draws upon a unique intersected pigment of blue-green-ness and the delicate, progressive cracks marking the Chinese/Sung dynasty (960-1279) porcelain exhibits of the National Palace Museum of Taiwan (Lin, DVD production interview; Szeto 2010, 428-429). I find Lin's artistic inspiration and stage aesthetics of "in-between-ness" as observed through the black-white constituted greyness, the blue-green mix of turquoise-ness, or the porcelain cracks en route between the start and end points to be of interesting thematic relevance. They all seem to echo

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<sup>44</sup> Chinese aesthetics observed in calligraphy and paintings define black calligraphic characters as the perception of reality/materiality (*shi*) and the rice paper's white/blank space as nonmaterial expression (*xu*), whereby the former is enhanced by the latter and vice versa. The dynamic relation inspires the artists to divert from realistic forms and draw from the abstract space, or from between realistic and abstract signs – the grey area, leaving receptive rooms for imagination and interpretation. (See Tseng 1987, 135-194.)

and highlight *Cursive II* 's third/in-between capacity of East-West artistic convergence as reflected in the Lin-Cage movement-and-sound amalgamations or interactions. In illustrating the work's third-space nuances and dynamics, I engage vignettes of a solo, duet, and group performance as critical modules developed between a *rooted* Chinese calligraphic heritage and a contemporary Taiwanese performance artistry intermixing Chinese-inspired meditative exercises (*taichi daoyin*), martial arts, American modern dance, and contemporary experimental music aesthetics. My analysis focuses on the inter-generative roles between Lin's Eastern disciplinary movement traditions and Cage's Western avant-garde music conceptions – a third-space effect transmitting a prevalent Zen spirituality of Chinese and Japanese repercussions. The East-West artistic hybridization immanent in the modules corroborate Taiwan's Chinese diasporic identity as a transcultural state repeatedly negotiated and constituted between Chinese-ness and Otherness of local-global implications.

The female solo of Lee Ching-chun (fourth section) suggests a blended portraiture of traditional Taiwan Chinese cultures and modern American artistries. Its movement spectrum conveys, besides the Graham techniques of contraction-and-release initiated from the lower abdominal core, a deep inner essence cultivated through the Taiwan-based *taichi daoyin* practice of focused breathing and meditation. An artistic synthesis of East-West movement applications yielding self-concentration and a pure sense of the moment, the solo moves free and spontaneous to Cage's music of similar East-West philosophical praxes. Lee takes the Cageian accompaniment as “non-existent” in focusing on her breaths to sustain and punctuate movements, while recognizing Cage's music as likewise focusing on himself and each sound created (Lee 2006, DVD dance interview). Cage's Western instrumental abstractions composed along the Taoist concept of *I Ching* (the Taoist book of change) emphasize the individual person or sound as the centre of creation, and “respectful non-interference” as “Tao” – the Way (of life) (Perloff 1994, 58). It is within this classic Taoist state that Cage exercises the free and focused

expression of the innermost self/nature without purposeful intrusion (Simpkins, 82), maintaining that musical cultures or entities stay separate in (naturally) complementing one another (ibid, 57). Lee describes her movement relations with the Cageian notes as “individual senses and expressions of space and freedom,” and “a beautiful partnership that starts and ends the dance together” (DVD dance interview). This East-West rapport of cultural crossings and philosophical commonality as cited by Lee the dancer extends to the rest of the solo, during which dance and music stay apart yet close together in attaining an organic and artistic wholeness.

Lee’s bodily articulation of Lin’s choreographic notion of “felt” energy and “freed” space at moments of composing calligraphy leads to seemingly random movements and rhythms, echoing Merce Cunningham’s *I Ching*-inspired choreographies of “chance procedures.”<sup>45</sup> Imaging the Eastern (Chinese) poetics of breeze borne willows, falling petals, or twirling winds around stoic mountains, her corporeal theatrics and breathing momentums coincide with Cage’s Western sonic abstractions of long, thick trumpet roars, momentary fluty shrieks, tapping rattan sticks and hissing grass emerging from prolonged silence, or abrupt muteness. The artistic pairing and creative binary produced in a third space between Eastern bodily aesthetics and Western aural explorations exact the *I Ching* philosophy of chance and silence – a conceptual track of Lin in developing *Cursive II* (Marshall 2007, interview with Lin, 38), and of Cage in his compositional approach.

Mindful of Lin’s choreographic inkling, Lee in her meditative focus on energy pulsations and calligraphic imageries dives in and out of Cage’s soundscape of an open, indeterminate duration, where she may initiate a slow and gradual directional extension of an arm to a long sharp pitch, or a sidekick hard and sudden to meet, by chance, a light and brisk knock of bundled

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<sup>45</sup> Like his life-long music collaborator John Cage, Merce Cunningham sees that music and dance can coexist and be independent of one another. Cunningham’s works engage chance procedures as inspired by *I Ching* and incorporate the effects of randomness in timing as well as spatial and movement configurations. The Taoist aesthetics of chance prompts his distinct Western and post-modern dance form of the cool detached and impersonal sensibility. (See Copeland 2004, 16; Szeto 2010, 431.)

rattans. That observed, Cage's episodic silence conceives "the inner force that prompts the sounds" (Pritchett 2012, web). It becomes useful intermittent non-restrictions for Lee's movements and prompts transcultural improvisations in the third space mediating Eastern and Western art expressions. The Cageian silence/blankness inspired by the Taoist-Zen Buddhist symbol of "emptiness" or "nothingness" reference the void or mindlessness<sup>46</sup> for more or the inexhaustible. In that respect, tranquil quietness accelerates Lee's meditative mode triggering egoless and carefree East-West artistic inter-phrasing, during which her airy bi-lateral Chinese traditional arm gestures of alternating up-down motions transform to a sole, soft hand-lift that sparks a wavy back bent with a gusty Euro-balletic arabesque (cf. Footnote 25).

As Lee executes her movements between Lin's Chinese calligraphic aesthetics and Cage's American sonic inventions, Cage builds his music between Western aural experiments and East Asian spiritual philosophy. In the third (artistic) space between the East and West, both incorporate self-focus and mental nonchalance concurring with Taoist-Zen Buddhist practices. The danced and the accompanied as two individually progressing forms make visual and visceral connections when presented on the same stage – where movements do not rely on music, and music does not control movements, but synchronized to evoke in viewers the intuitively sensed and spiritually meaningful. The Taoist-Zen Buddhist ambit of "being" and "letting be" permits Lee to concentrate on her movements and breathing, as much as it allows Cage to dwell on his compositions and spatial energy, resulting in each movement, and each sound, as "the centre of artistic thoughts and creation" (Perloff 1994, 58).

The third space existing between Eastern and Western artistic and philosophical interpretations respectively in Lin the choreographer and Cage the composer, as reflected in the solo, enables both artists' innate creative centres, however separate or different, to converse and interweave as one soulful art piece. In this special space grounded on common Taoist-Zen

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<sup>46</sup> It is considered that Buddhahood may be attained when the mind is free from strains and attachments, completely emptied and void – a mental stage that bestirs spontaneous insights into the absolute nature of the phenomenal world and cosmic operations (See Suzuki 1996, 255; Simpkins 1999, 52-53.)

Buddhist values, Lee's interpretation of Lin's choreographic impetus of calligraphic forces and associative images correlate impeccably with Cage's spacious music sphere, where boundless energy flows from calligraphy making are sensed, absorbed, and re-created by the dancing oneness of the mind-and-body. Lee's placid and collected presence suggests a passionate, immersed calligraphic experience, and her intent-free dialogic plays with Cage's equally focused and emotive sonic intensity. The artistic possibilities of visual-aural imaginaries in this section, at length, presage the third space(s) intrinsic to Lin's and Cage's creativities – the vital crux that connects Eastern philosophical roots and Western artistic modulations for a harmonic fusion of interactive cultural inferences.

The duet (seventh section), performed by Chou Wei-ping and Sung Chao-chiun, exemplifies a philosophical third space danced between Chinese calligraphic, American-Cageian compositional and Japanese Zen aesthetics. The Taoist-Zen Buddhist doctrine of the way of nature or cyclical cosmology represented in the art of calligraphy making presents a thematic feature in the duet's movements enhanced by Cage's music. The two dancers, reconstituting the Yin-Yang life cycle depicted in *I Ching*, manifest endless creations and re-creations of “complementary cosmic forces and beings” (Simpkins, 5). At this rate, male dancer Sung, impersonating the Yang force with a strong masculinity and highly meditative mind, counters the feminine, engulfing, and softly yielding Yin force expressed by female dancer Chou's flexible torso. Though of opposing qualities, the dance partners complement each other in a sensory correspondence with Cage's prolonged Western instrumental passage of trumpet and horn crescendos and glissandos layered over softly clinking chimes and rumbling drums.

The duet's breath flows and trance-like movements, immersed in Cage's sustained Western brass-woodwind notes, showcase the Taoist-Zen Buddhist concept of varying and perpetuating energy forces in complementary existence. This classic Chinese philosophy of the infinite cycle of life conveys mainly via Chou's focused navigation of continuous breath-driven

energy spiraling from her *dantien* (the lower abdominal centre; cf. Footnote 28) to the rest of her body and extremities. Charged with deep and consistent inhalations and exhalations that keep energy circulated between the *dantien* and the corporeal circuit, the process emulates the writing of the numeral figure “8” – the symbol of inter-generative Yin-Yang forces and cosmic infinity.<sup>47</sup> Its meaning is visually blatant when Chou, accompanied by Sung’s solemn and masculine presence, executes a seated posture of feminine flexibility replicating the figure’s winding contours. Moving against Cage’s austere and meditative sonic backdrop, Sung with balanced martial arts stands and extended hand gestures of an inner focused strength remains behind Chou’s petite and yoga-based stature, reinforcing her complex bodily curves like a grounded, mystic power. The scene enacts in viewers the artistic feel or association of Sung the calligrapher in his mentally immersed Yang state of producing a masterpiece that is Chou – the dancing Yin energy that reciprocally constitutes and inspires Sung’s Yang creative existence.

Notwithstanding intrinsic Chinese philosophical essences, the duet contains Japanese aesthetics of distinct Zen Buddhist influences. The unpredictable and intuitively sensed or beheld help progress and shape the dancing moments. Free of performance purposes and artistic preconceptions, the dancers’ organic movements with sporadic interventions of meditative pauses and sudden stillness capture Cage’s similarly sporadic sounds and soundlessness – the unlimited aural space speckled with a jingling chime, a pungent piano note, an intuitive string pluck, or a cymbal blast of Zen awakening. As though perusing one Japanese haiku<sup>48</sup> after

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<sup>47</sup> The writing of “8” metaphorizes energy gathered/drawn from the median, flowing through first the upper and then the lower loop of the figure – eventually returning to the median for another course of the same action. The pattern linked to the Taoist notion of Yin-Yang balance and cosmic perpetration is a commonly used aesthetic symbol in traditional Chinese art and literary forms including Chinese painting, calligraphy, and dance (Loh 1988, 30).

<sup>48</sup> Traditional Japanese poems (consisting of three short verses with a standard syllabic structure of 5-7-5) can be traced back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century. They typify a way of looking at the physical world and seeing something deeper, like the very nature of existence, leaving the reader with a strong feeling or impression (yourdictionary.com, web, 2018).

another, the audience is enticed with the poetic and immaterial thrills occurring at every Zen Buddhist realization of transient and irregular pulsations as the “Tao” (Way) of life. The onstage visual elements that breathe and move with Cage’s music are aesthetically fertile in that they incorporate, along with Chinese and American performance artistries, a sublime space of Japanese simplicity. The scene presented on a minimalistic stage with intersected square and rectangular lighting brings forth a Japanese-Zen cleanliness and artless clarity. A stage design evoking the space of calligraphy making, or the calligrapher’s pure and focused mentality when composing his masterpieces, it enhances the fluid corporeal shapes and embodied forces of different calligraphic ink tones dashing and leaking across lit rice papers. From movements and music effects to the stage set, Zen aesthetics of Japanese precision predominate in this section with persistent grace and subtlety.

The group dance (eighth section) interpreted by Huang Pei-hua, Wang Chih-hao and others – an embodied internalization of calligraphic images and motions, and an abstract transformation of the internalized and associative feelings as breath-charged dance steps, demonstrates the aesthetic power of Chinese calligraphy through integrating martial arts techniques, taichi precepts, and Japanese Zen properties. In this section, Japanese Zen aura accelerates with Cage’s accompaniment of *Ryoanji* (The Temple of the Dragon at Peace) – a score inspired by the rock garden of a Japanese Zen temple of the same name.<sup>49</sup> The score, featuring musical “space-time” through temporal rhythmic, meter, or accent layers and their peculiar anomalies (Retallack 1996, 242; Latartara 2007, 101), subsumes a Japanese Zen awareness of irregularities, imperfections and instinctual momentums as enduring life occurrences – the Cageian perception

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<sup>49</sup> *Ryoanji* (The Temple of the Dragon at Peace) is a Cageian number piece named after a Japanese Zen temple in Kyoto. The piece is inspired by the temple’s rock garden – a composition of meditative and enlightening qualities derived from the directional placements, interconnected and disconnected shapes/contours of the 15 rocks situated on the white raked garden sand. (See Nitschke 1999, 88-89.)

of music making as “a way of life” (Kostelanetz 1993, 136). Lin’s choreographic revelation of the sage awareness within the frame of calligraphy making, from the various angles of audile, bodily and emotive aesthetics, reflects a culturally intricate and spiritually stirring anecdote.

The effect of heavy, automatic strikes of the temple bell at evenly timed intervals through most of the dance tends to reiterate Lin’s rendition of calligraphic momentums that feel like “rocks dropping from a high cliff” (Lin 2006, DVD choreographic notes). The solid bell tone, imitated by striking a metal rod against another within specified time brackets (cf. Footnote 43), vibrates a lucid sensation of weight and balance collectively expressed through the ensemble’s cultivated consciousness of martial arts and taichi principles. My visual-audio senses relate the temple bell effect to a meditative and rhythmic Zen awareness of the “dropping rocks” as strong natural forces – an aesthetic intensification of internalized and abstracted images and energy dynamics sensed and processed by the dancing mind-and-body. Each sound of the temple bell reflects the dancers’ internal sensing of a rock dropped, and their physical re-creation of the “weight” and “falling” energies through martial arts and taichi-based movement/gestural abstractions. Cage’s direct, punchy and unrestrained sound arrangements in the dance express the same performative power, resonating with the invading forces of the vertical, colossal calligraphic brush strokes spewed and spurted on the backdrop of the scene.

From beneath the temple bell rhythms glides a mystic course of horn-flute interplay – an undercurrent of surging energy that I feel is parallel to the dancers’ deep, continuous and intensifying breaths. The sound-and-breath pattern juxtaposes solid physical strength with soft, spiritual substances – as depicted by the dance team’s angular arm and sharp elbow movements, punching palms, stomping feet, and loud hand claps amid a sequel of airy leaps, circular hand swings, and gently swaying serpentine bodies. I observe from the scene a balanced emancipation



and intangible fusion of martial arts and taichi essences. The *taichi daoyin* notion (cf. Footnote 40) of strength absorbing softness, and softness dissolving strength as embodied in the music-and-dance sensations re-enacts the Yin-Yang “Tao” (Way) of continuation, connectedness and unification between the opposing yet complementing in constituting the cosmic cycle. In fact, Cage’s horn-flute mysticism highlights the sustained Yin-Yang drama of connection between strength and softness, when, toward the latter half of the dance, a linear formation of dancers posing like invincible icebergs slowly melt like water onto the stage floor, and, from the fallen regimen – a solitary female figure gradually arises to continue dancing like a revived spirit. The imagery enfolded by Cageian woodwind elusiveness communicates a poetic lyric of martial arts-taichi (Yang-versus-Yin) perpetuation, sculpting a visual imagination and identification of the interactive and self-generating energies at work in calligraphy making.

Viewing this piece, I am struck by a personal Zen moment (realization) that Cage is the destined shadow or Other selfness of *Cursive II*. I base my perception on the axiom that the choreography is rooted with Lin’s and Cage’s common philosophical insights and spiritual cultivations of Taoist-Zen Buddhist practices. Presupposing the artistic commonality of a third-space attribution, I consider that Lin choreographing in between Chinese philosophical concepts, Chinese traditional and American modern movement aesthetics, and Cage composing in between American contemporary musical structures and Asian spiritual inspirations, both create in their individual third spaces intersected with similar Taoist-Zen Buddhist notions. As such, the third space constitutes the agency and intangible suturing of two culturally and geographically distinct artistic disciplines as an elegant, holistic art piece. The harmony and confluence of non-interfering dance and music in this dimension is as surprisingly efficacious as it is boldly innovative.

Recent dance scholars view *Cursive II* or *The Cursive Trilogy* in its entirety as Lin's choreographic participation in the global economy by engaging dance practices of different Eastern and Western cultural origins and displacing Sino-centric influences (Szeto, 427; Lin 2010, 259). I address its choreographic impetus as a local (Taiwanese) artistic contemplation of global technological flows<sup>50</sup> revealing a "glocalized" rather than globalized project. In Lin's words, the choreography is his "requiem for Chinese calligraphy," stating that "the younger generation is writing less with brushes and more with computers these days, and many don't even write with pens" (Lin 2006, DVD choreographic notes). Lin's reflection vocalizes regrets of a Chinese intellectual heritage gradually supplanted with a global modernity of communication technology. I observe that this reflection applies to Chinese natives and migrants inhabiting not only Taiwan, but also other local cities or regions worldwide. The work is, in substance, a glocalized dance creation of pragmatic aesthetics that teaches a contemporary moral of a disappearing cultural value and tradition – in both local and global perspectives.

Lin's blended artistries and concepts, mobilized in the third space through self-Other interactions, combine multiple performing and visual arts elements in a new synthesis that witnesses Taiwan's identity of social diversity and artistic fluidity. I connect the third-space attributed socio-artistic mobility with Taiwanese dance scholar Yu-ling Chao's note – that the "flows, exchanges, and in-between elements" perpetrate changing ethno-cultural characteristics in the society of Taiwan, indicating a transformation of the double consciousness<sup>51</sup> in the

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<sup>50</sup> Arjun Appadurai's terminological reference of "technoscape" as technological impacts connecting and intervening worldly progresses/ developments. Technoscape, together with ethnoscape, mediascape, financescape, and ideoscape are what Appadurai defines as the "different streams or flows along which cultural material may be moving across national boundaries" while impacting local cultural lifestyles, social economies and politics as persistent global forces. (See Appadurai 1996, 33; cf. Footnote 5.)

<sup>51</sup> See Paul Gilroy's concept of double consciousness or cultural double-ness acquired in the Black Atlantic diaspora (1993, 38). The concept provides the theoretical thread to Chao's notion of multi consciousness in the Taiwanese identity.

(Chinese-) Taiwanese identity to a multiplicity of identities (2005, 13). From Han Chinese migrants including the provincial cultures of Hakka and Fujian, and indigenous tribes native to Taiwan as illustrated respectively in *Legacy* and *Nine Songs*, to Japanese and Euro-American artistic cultures impacting *Cursive II*, the identification of “Taiwanese” in Lin’s choreographic endeavours unravels a multicultural synthesis. It indicates a representation evolving from between and amid migrants of Chinese descent, local Taiwan-based aborigines, and foreign or Other attributors of socio-economic and political causes. It signifies the multi consciousness of Taiwan, which Lin’s works persistently emphasize as Taiwanese uniqueness and national distinctness from the mainland Chinese ancestral regime.

### **Between and Fusing East and West – the New and Other Chinese-ness**

The Chinese traditions and Western art including Western music are always part of my life. I’ve never drawn a line between the East and the West – it’s all mine. Take *Cursive II* for example, it is developed from Chinese meditation, taichi, and martial arts to Cage’s (American contemporary) music (Lin 2006, DVD production interview).

I consider my choreography as just “dance.” They are neither Canadian nor Canadian-Chinese. The East and West concepts are non-existent to me. If I were introduced as a “choreographer from China” in the international dance scenes, I’d always ask them to introduce me as a “Hong Kong” choreographer instead – this is how I see myself and my works” (Ng-Quah 2012, 22).

Both Ng and Lin see “wholeness” in their choreographic works that transcend cultural and artistic boundaries. I agree that true works of art do not project conscious distinctions between the East and the West, otherwise they risk crafty collages in lieu of artistic and meaningful depths. As Chinese diasporic dance artists working in neighbouring proximity to the Chinese ancestral mainland, Ng (in Hong Kong) and Lin (in Taiwan) benefit from a deep rooted and tactile Chinese heritage that dispenses inexhaustible Chinese cultural resources and

choreographic inspirations. Being Chinese descendants in “Chinese-populated places” outside of mainland China, the two artists are able to integrate their innately viable Chinese heritage with countless possibilities of intercultural movements, multiple artistic disciplines, and diverse creative media in their poly-cultural living environments. The British or Canadian in Ng’s consciousness, and the Americans, Japanese, or Taiwanese indigenous in Lin’s, as reflected in the dance productions discussed, have all played influential roles in the artists’ education, dance trainings, and their cultural-artistic passions and insights.

Cultural-artistic multiplicity transpired through specific socio-historicity and politically sensitive eras of the inhabited locations, in turn, draws out the “hybridized” Chinese spirit that is both personal and unique in the artist’s dance creations. When the rooted Chinese-ness of Hong Kong or Taiwan underlies the creative action, and the multiple artistic elements and diverse Otherness configuring movement contexts and aesthetics infuse with that Chinese-ness as a distinct place-evolved art form, its Eastern, Western, and/or mixed East-West origins remain mutant. The “oneness” and “exclusive character” of the work outshines all, and the binary factors of the East and West become invisible. I tabulate this artistic circumstance as relevant to Bakhtin’s analysis of a “culture” developed by means of an “open-ended, creative dialogue of subcultures, of insiders and outsiders, of diverse factions” (Clifford, 46). The respective works of Ng and Lin, like a “danced” culture of “polyphonic novel” (ibid) features, are created in an original interplaying and mixing of inherent Chinese and Other cultural and artistic components that specify Hong Kong and Taiwanese social belongings against a generic and generalized Chinese cultural conception.

In retrospect of a culture and its language being the eventful mixing and integration of different cultural, social and individual attributes, Ng’s and Lin’s productions entail the quality

of “heteroglossia” – Bakhtin’s elaboration of languages or speeches (of different regions, groups and individuals) that intersect with one another in generating multiple forms and meanings (1981, 263; Katrak, 14). Adhering to dance multiplicity and placial hybridity in their (specific) third space(s) between cultures, Ng and Lin choreograph heteroglossia on Hong Kong and Taiwanese turfs particularized by their diverse peoples. Ng’s aesthetic compilation of British ballet steps, Euro-Canadian repertory inspirations, traditional Chinese props, nostalgic Hong Kong sites, and contemporary styled photographic movements traces a post-colonial Hong Kong of melded East-West features. Lin’s creative engagement of modern American movements, traditional Chinese practices and philosophies, Taiwanese indigeneity, and Cageian experimental American music enhancement reasserts Taiwan’s Chinese and diverse cultural veins, and past colonial-present foreign influences through a visual-aural East-West conflation of socio-historic and political struggles. Heedless of their heterogeneous and poly cultural-artistic presentations, the cases of Ng and Lin indicate the East-West amalgams that are definitively of Hong Kong and Taiwan – the new and Other Chinese places merging rooted Chinese ingredients with diverse Western-Other cultural and capitalist traits distinct from ancestral Chinese socialist and dance traditions (cf. Footnote 1). Tracking the notion of heteroglossia, multiplicity of a language fosters hybridity that progresses and reimagines new and multiple interpretations or positioning of the same/original identity. From a developmental-logical viewpoint, East-West boundaries are non-existent in Ng’s and Lin’s works that blur rooted Chinese-ness and diasporic Otherness – a vital dance illumination of the fused and consummated identities as “Hong Kongese” and “Taiwanese.”

Comparable to the development of a culture, the placial identities embodied in the works of Ng and Lin are ones that intermingle and synthesize with multiple Others in becoming

what “they are” in the lived Chinese diasporas of Hong Kong and Taiwan. As Stuart Hall indicates, this process signifies the resourceful grounding of (place-specific) socio-histories and apposite operations/participations of self and Other cultures (1996, 4) – a condition that I note as always changing in response to the social, political, and ideological systems of the diasporic places. The choreographic identifications of the East-West converged Hong Kong-ness, or Taiwanese-ness, on all counts, reference the artists’ creative resources as acquired through such places’ historical and socio-cultural properties that are Sino-stemmed and coactively departed (from the mainland Chinese ancestry), therewith constructing the new and Other Chinese identities of Hong Kong and Taiwanese “belongingness.”

“Lin is a choreographer that produces culturally distinct works without being indifferent” (Lin and Moritz 2006, DVD audience notes). I locate dance critic Jochen Schmidt’s remark (applied to Lin’s works) in the choreographies of Ng as well. Situated in between rooted Chinese ancestral and Other cultures in diasporic milieus, their works do not fall within the expected norm of “between this and that” in terms of cultural vibes and artistic conjurations, nor do they disseminate commonly practiced cultural-artistic clichés intended for diasporic and global receptivity. Rather, these are choreographic works that interweave and synthesize Chinese and Other historical data, cultural values, and philosophical aesthetics in defining Hong Kong and Taiwanese authenticities.

I credit the placial distinctness and constituting choreographic capacity to the constructive agency of the third space intrinsic to the artists’ socio-politically complex yet choreographically inspiring Chinese diasporic milieus. This critical space existing between Chinese *roots*-selfness and multi Otherness premises inter-cultural translation, interpretation, (re) appropriation, and negotiation as witnessed in the choreographic exemplars examined. The diverse cultural and

artistic dialogues involved affirm the uniqueness of Hong Kong in Ng's case, and of Taiwan in Lin's – with each emerging strong and resilient through a diaspora-spawned hybrid art stream of Chinese-Other heritages.

On that basis, I expand the third space from one facilitating Chinese identity reinventions through place-based cultural in-between-ness to one forging ongoing Chinese identity reinstatements in between global political economies and local cultural transformations – thus a “glocal” process-construct. As filtered through Ng's dance-and-photo statements of a collective Hong Kong memory and social uncertainties, the third space takes the form of a local, civic transitional crisis between former British colonial and present mainland Chinese sovereignties – a repertory median of global colonial-capitalist economy affecting local social patterns and creative directions in the big picture. Spotlighting Lin's choreographic and music choices proclaiming Taiwan (of Asian and Euro-American influences) as a partaker of the Chinese heritage yet not part of the mainland Chinese regime, the third space located between Chinese ancestral and Other diverse cultures in his works signifies the Taiwanese splice of engaging local socio-cultural and political experiences for global cultural and receptive-economic connections. Far from indifferent but fervent and forceful, Ng's and Lin's dance creations bequeath discretely an assured movement rhetoric of transcultural and “trans-glocal”<sup>52</sup> intertextuality – a dance effect mobilized by the diaspora-goaded third space as a culturally fluid and constantly conjunctive modality.

What makes the choreographies of Ng and Lin culturally distinct and artistically unique is the place-time factor designating their creative paths. The socio-politically sensitive positions of

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<sup>52</sup>A “gift” term from Professor Danielle Robinson (Dance Department, York University) pertaining to my theoretical address of the choreographies examined as ultimate artistic products of interpenetrating global and local forces.

Hong Kong and Taiwan, significant historical epochs constituting the artists' interpretations of and responses concerning their respective birthplaces, the "placial" past and present that continue to torment or celebrate their existence as individual citizens with a creative (dance) voice, or as artists of socio-historical critiques – all are under the one orchestration of "placial-temporal" determinants. Had the choreographers not been deeply affected by time-defined local histories and traditions, nor made full use of "placial" questions and creative freedoms in their lived diasporas, their works would never have spoken what speaks to generations of contemporary audiences and dance critics. Being at specific places and speaking specific languages about those places constructed through temporally gripping and emotional events, as I understand, contributes the convincing creative logistics and artistic eloquence of Ng and Lin.

I observe in Ng's and Lin's productions an embodied "diasporic dance genre" – a creative attitude-language developed in the Chinese diasporic places of Hong Kong and Taiwan. The distinct attitude-language, as ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor suggests, originates from music and performing artists "caught between" their ancestral and adoptive or predominant cultures in diasporas (Taylor, 12). The artists' tendency to hybridize their works through integrating diasporic cultural and artistic sources produce new or alternative forms that signify reinvented or hybrid identities – as reflected by the Ng-Lin creative stratum and dance embodiments of new or Other Chinese-ness of Hong Kongese and Taiwanese inaugurations and placial distinctions.

The notion of a diasporic dance genre did not occur to me until I started the Ng-Lin case study. It evolves from social and historic-political questions to an artistic (dance) matter of cultural insights and creative (identity and disciplinary) reinventions. Its inclusion and open-ended potency of new or alternate cultural-artistic vocabularies and social meanings, I reassert, derive basically from the third space of (multiple) cultural in-between-ness in the inhabited



diasporas. To Ng and Lin, this in-between-ness exists as their conscious or subconscious nexus to converge diverse artistries and aesthetics that articulate the cultural uniqueness of being Hong Kongese and Taiwanese – the Chinese diasporic identities in choreographic commemoration. It is such uniqueness yielded through the rugged and rigorous cultural becoming of distinct placial “belongings” that prods my encapsulation of a contemporary Chinese diasporic dance genre in the Ng-Lin repertoires. To my knowledge and intuitive understanding, this perceived genre does not specify Chinese, Eastern, or Western germinations. It belongs to the individual dance texts and characters of Hong Kong and Taiwan authentications shaped between rooted Sino socio-historical questions, Other bygone colonial and existent migrant cultures – inevitably engineered through global political-economic impacts and local adaptive social changes in historical and transcultural contexts.

## Chapter 3

### Choreographing and Reinventing Chinese Diasporic *Routes*:

#### a Toronto-Vancouver Case Study

A “changing same” – the diaspora concept on the inescapable hybridity and intermixtures of ideas yielding a course of instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade; a pattern of movement, relocation, and transformation that is more appropriately approached via the homonym “routes” (Gilroy 1993, xi, 19).

Asian North American identities with a hyphen between cultures generate discourses of “envisioning possibilities” from which to reshape and reimagine “beyond the hyphen” (Ty and Goellnicht 2004, 10).

The diaspora concept has for centuries typified West-bound migrations and Western geo-cultural impacts in scholarly discourses. Undoubtedly, its initial Jewish relevance<sup>53</sup> has inspired constant explications and analyses on diverse global migrants seeking qualitative living in technologically advanced and culturally accommodative places – quite often those in the West with presumed signals of individual mobility and socio-economic viability. As a (Hong Kong) Chinese-Canadian dance practitioner-researcher, I aspire to share personal thoughts and experiences about my adopted Canadian homeland playing a vital role in Chinese identity and artistic transformations. In this chapter, I investigate Chinese diasporic choreographies and socio-cultural pertinences developed in the North American migrant niches of Toronto and

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<sup>53</sup> The diaspora concept was first applied to Jewish dispersions outside the Holy Land. Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has been broadly used to indicate the “journey” to the New Land (of promises). Its application has thus extended to include the various cases of the Black diaspora, the Chinese diaspora, the Indian diaspora, and other ethnic groups scattered throughout the world due to political, religious, and economic causes (Brah 1996, 181-182; Lin 2004, 80).

Vancouver. A study focusing on representative works reflecting place-relevant embodiments of Canadian-instituted features, it explores the idea of Canadian “becoming” in choreographing Chinese-Canadian.

As indicated in the previous chapter, I perceive the choreographic prototypes in discourse as artistic products of Homi Bhabha’s diasporic concept of “The Third Space” or cultural in-between-ness (cf. pp. 4-5; Footnote 4), – the social phenomenon resulting from “placial” conditions (cf. p. 4; Footnote 3) of geo-cultural-political interplays. In the diverse Toronto and Vancouver cosmopolitan sites, these products reveal a creative *route* ploughed between the individual choreographers’ ancestral-native and adopted diasporic cultures, as manifest in the visible hyphenated space of “Chinese-Canadian.” My socio-ethnographic lens suggests the products as dance artistries derived from Arjun Appadurai’s “ethnoscape” of global migratory movements (cf. p. 7; Footnote 5), and creative outcomes of Roland Robertson’s notion of “glocalization” (cf. pp. 8-9; Footnote 6) – a phenomenon developed through a latent, persistently influential space mediating between global political-economic forces and local socio-cultural constructions. Choreographed in a third space between Chinese and Other cultural heritages, and between interactive global marketing and local creative trends along a diasporic *route* of artistic-economic sustenance, these Chinese-Canadian dance works demonstrate both hybrid and acculturated artistic texts in consistent fabrication (cf. Footnote 2). Of sociological significance are their repertory reflections of the changing and reinvented selves beyond Chinese – the new (duo, mixed, or multiple) Chinese diasporic identities specific to the multicultural and cosmopolitical milieus of Toronto and Vancouver (cf. p. 21).

Inserting my own choreographies in this self-ethnographic study, I examine the above dance works produced in an East-West cultural and global-local in-between (third) space of vigorous identity reconstructions. In an attempt to comprehend, acknowledge, and articulate the researched through my own similar and/or different dance and diasporic experiences, I

juxtapose analyses of my Toronto productions (*Apart yet Together*, 1998; *Behind Silk Ribbons & Rebozos*, 2001; *Ending an Arabic Fable*, 2008) and (mainland) Chinese-Canadian choreographer Wen Wei Wang's Vancouver repertoires (*Unbound*, 2006; *Cockpit*, 2009; *In Transition/Under the Skin*, 2012). Delving into the dance concepts and movements, I see the works as umbilical metaphors of Canadian socio-historical and geopolitical shaping of Chinese diasporic identities. The dancing Chinese selves reflecting differing Western and poly cultural-artistic *routes* of the choreographically in-between, in this respect, divulge diasporic multiculturalism or cultural diversity as a productive common ground.

The Canadian praxis of multiculturalism<sup>54</sup> honouring a mosaic nation of intercultural respect and collaboration facilitates migrated dance artists' awareness and exploration of their third/in-between space for socio-cultural advancements and economically viable chances. Multicultural dance forms and contexts performed in major cities such as Toronto and Vancouver are pivotal in the artistic celebrations of Canadian multiculturalism. On a cultural-political level, many of these works reflect Canadian arts councils' funding mandate of diverse dance inclusivity and advocacy. Ontario Arts Council (OAC)'s former Culture-Specific Dance Grant created in 1990, for instance, was meant to fulfill the needs for multicultural dance programs and policies in the broader dance community. In view of the rapidly expanding diverse immigrants since the 1970s, the temporary grant was set up to assist the transition of dance artists/groups from the multicultural dance stream to mainstream acceptance (Cornell 2004, 417).

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<sup>54</sup> Canada adopted multiculturalism as an official policy under Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau in 1971. Under the Canadian Multicultural Act of 1988 enacted by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Canada was declared a nation recognizing and preserving diversity in races, traditions, customs, religions, and languages – a state promoting respect and equal rights among the distinct heritages and social identities representative of a Canadian mosaic culture (Kobayashi 1983, 205-206; Canadian Multiculturalism Act 1988). The Canadian government is regarded as the “ideological” instigator of multiculturalism for its public emphasis on the socio-economic importance of immigration (Wayland 1997, 33-58). Despite the earliest and predominant cultures of aboriginal, British, and French origins, and the designation of English and French as official languages, Canada continues to absorb immigrants of other cultural descents from different parts of the world. Immigration has been integral to the development of Canadian multiculturalism since the 1960s, as amendments of immigration acts that used to favour British, American, and European migrants prompted influxes of diverse peoples from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East etc. (Ksenych and Liu 2001, 407). Currently housing 250 ethnic groups (Statistics Canada 2011, web), Canada receives and resettles annually immigrants of economic, refugee, and family reunification categories (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2017, web).

The OAC's support of "distinctive identities" in the arts field in creating "possibilities" that are "new in Ontario's experience yet ancient in the history of world cultures" (ibid, 418) was soon echoed by policy makers of the Canada Council's Dance Office. Soon after 1991, the Canada Council's Racial Advisory Committee recommended that grants be readily accessible to both individual artists and companies of diverse backgrounds (ibid, 419). I perceive that Canadian multiculturalism and art funders work hand in hand in shaping the developments of Chinese diasporic dance forms and strategies of my discourse. Multicultural Canada, ideologically framed by cultural diversity and receptiveness, remains the official and core agency in the making of the choreographies under study.

The Canadian mandate in promoting respect and equal rights among Canadian native and migrant cultures, regardless of differences and personal choices, nurtures "a free and constructive space" between co-existing cultural heritages, and between global migrant-economic progressions and local cosmopolitan initiatives. This Canadian space correlates with Bhabha's concept of the "third/culturally in-between" space. Wang and I as immigrated Canadian citizens of Chinese descent, by cultural-biological and migratory-creative factors, find our social and artistic places in this exact space – literally scripted as the hyphen in the standardized Canadian cosmopolitan address of "Chinese-Canadian."

The hyphen inserted in between mainstream and migrant cultures, despite occasional political controversies and scholarly critiques involving racial segregation or identity fragmentation in governmental debates and diaspora literatures, suggests an optimal potential through my dance lens. Its insertion specifically between "Chinese" and "Canadian" in this case study provides the spatial symbol of a cultural linkage, an artistic connection, and an epistemic bridging between Chinese ancestral histories and present diasporic conditions. In analyzing

Wang's and my choreographic developments, I see infinite possibilities in a fluid and vibrant hyphenated space that continuously inspire and build our dance expressions. From a socio-cultural perspective, the hyphen indicating our cultural origin and diasporic status fosters an intrinsic choreographic space that remains adaptable and enabling, permitting the ever intersecting states of past and current cultural inscriptions and artistic data in reimagining and (re) articulating new and more identities of placial-temporal particularities.

Situated between and conjoining Chinese and Canadian cultures, the hyphen signifies a transformative *route* from a homogenous to a hybridized dance vocabulary, and a concurrent diasporic identity shift from Chinese to Chinese-Canadian. Corroborating the ethno-sociological view of identities as “multiple and mobile,” and capable of “new articulations” and reconstructions through “changing the fixed, stable and homogenous past” (Sarup 1996, 57), the hyphen as a routed diasporic process connecting the two different cultures attached to its either end channels the formation of mobile and new identities. In retrospect, Canadian multiculturalism with its cultural mosaic inception grounding cosmopolitan Toronto and Vancouver, and all migrated identities thither, are primal in construing and maintaining this process critical for the choreographic mobility and identity reinventions manifest in Wang's and my works.

As reflected in our choreographic paradigms, I further observe that diasporic dance creations of (duo or intercultural) identity dynamics correspond to and evolve in an intermediary space between ongoing global and local synergies. My note of Robertson's “glocalization” as “the global linking with the local, and the local constituting the global” (cf. p. 8) suggests the linking of global cultural-political practices with local creative and socio-economic initiatives, and the social and productive patterns of local cultures affecting global political-economic

activities. The event entrenches a (transparent) third/in-between space – Bhabha’s idea of “the cutting edge of translation and negotiation” (2004, 56; cf. pp. 4-5). I elaborate on this space as located between geo-specific ancestral selves and diasporic Others, and between global developmental coercions and local ingredients. It marks the praxis point where cultural, socio-political and economic interflows enable inventive and marketable products for both global and local appeals and consumptions. As third-space artists choreographing between Chinese-ness and Canadian-ness, Wang and I develop dances that bear glocalized traits of interactive and interpenetrative global-local cultural resources, artistic inspirations, and dissemination strategies. The constant choreographic connectivity of global viewership with local cultural consciousness is integral to reconstructing our personalized social identities and artistic *routes* in the Western diaspora of Canada.

While defining our works as placial (Toronto- and Vancouver-based) products of Canadian social characteristics, I recognize mine as reflective of “the global linking with the local” – an exemplification of global migrant cultures inspiring local Torontonians dance creations and collaborations. Embodying the global migrant vibrancy that underpinned Toronto’s multicultural ambience of the 1990s and 2000s, such works illustrate the intercultural dance themes of harmonious co-existences and co-creations, the deployed yet aspired socio-cultural *route* sought and re-imagined through a poly cultural-artistic synthesis at Toronto dance venues. Underscoring the choreographic impetus of “placial acculturations”<sup>55</sup> catalyzed from an initial

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<sup>55</sup> My reinterpretation of dance ethnologist Gertrude Kurath’s notion of “acculturation” as “placial” in this case study, referencing the diasporic dance dynamics of merging the original and Other cultural traditions as ones specific to the places of Toronto and Vancouver – the two diverging dance processes in remoulding and re-presenting migrated Chinese-ness through its adaptation to the new and distinct place-based socio-cultural and ideological values (cf. Footnote 2).

dance-migrant instinct of “rebound,”<sup>56</sup> I denote my choreographies as a Toronto engenderment in the third space extant between Chinese ancestral and Canadian diasporic cultures.

In sustaining traditional Chinese dance (cf. Footnote 1) as a core vocabulary and later reconfiguring it as a dance text of individualized artistic hybridity, the works witness a spontaneous expression of my lived Toronto environment of diverse cultural composites, and my alternate (dual) identity of Chinese-Canadian. Against a Canadian mosaic backdrop, my production of *Apart yet Together – a Chinese-Indian-Korean Dance Experience* depicts dialoguing hyphenated identities about their migratory histories, (similar or variant) dance sources, and diasporic social visions. *Behind Silk Ribbons & Rebozos*, created in collaboration with a Mexican-Indigenous colleague, connects the (parallel) Canadian *routes* of migrated Chinese-ness and Mexican-ness in terms of identity relocation, artistic discoveries, and dance mobility. *Ending an Arabic Fable*, a dance poem conceived and choreographed at the height of Middle Eastern migrations to major Canadian cities, interprets a troubled Western diasporic adaptation based on the factual account of a Palestinian newcomer. In a Canadian cosmopolitan atmosphere promoting cultural distinctness and ideological inclusiveness through the arts and socio-economies, these works suggest a miniature of global cultural expressions presented as a local Toronto dance-music-theatre series.

Wang’s case of contemporary-balletic concoction, conversely, reflects “the local constituting the global” in using local Beijing experiences and Chinese traditional social practices to express the global issues of Chinese diasporic identification, gender inequality, and sexual orientation. Drawing creative inspirations from Vancouver’s diverse cosmopolitan

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<sup>56</sup> Gertrude Kurath indicates “rebound” as one of the dynamic processes of a migrated dance form when the original characteristics of the form “carried over to the new world” are practiced to “a greater degree” than what is manifest in the home soil – an ironical preference of Western dance traits and aesthetics to cultural roots and dance lineage (1960, 241).



setting, Wang engages his hyphenated identity of (mainland) Chinese-Canadian to posit his works for international reception. In this light, Wang's choreographies strive to address his cultural in-between-ness with cultural-artistic blending (of East-West social values and dance aesthetics) via translation and negotiation. His diasporic existence caught between Chinese and Canadian – as illustrated through the *In Transition/Under the Skin* movements, the iconic replicas of foot-binding Chinese shoes worn and explored by contemporary-balletic dancers in *Unbound*, and the overlong pheasant feathers signifying an ancient Chinese warrior culture and worn as a modern male headpiece in *Cockpit*, showcase not just a metaphoric knot of cultural symbols and social critiques. I read the movement-and-prop aesthetics as danced re-exoticism<sup>57</sup> that prompts global enchantment while satisfying Western fantasies of exotic Eastern encounters and identities. The creative scenario reflects a classic Canadian *route* of Chinese diasporic dance artists seeking a socio-psychical equilibrium between the ancestral past and diasporic present, and a staging tactic of cosmopolitical differences<sup>58</sup> with all culturally diverse co-existences and imagined integrations involved.

Of the same Chinese ancestry and different geo-sociological backgrounds, I am enthused in rediscovering the meanings of my own works as I examine Wang's choreographic initiatives stemming from within the common Western diasporic artistic haven of Canada. The progress of engaging my self-experiences as a (Hong Kong) Chinese-Canadian dancer-choreographer in studying the productions of a (mainland) Chinese-Canadian counterpart is artistically fruitful and

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<sup>57</sup> My note of Chinese diasporic reactivation of Edward Said's notion of Orientalism that associates with Euro-colonial depiction of the mythic and exotic East, during which Western fantasies of Eastern exotic objects, themes, or representations are used by dance artists of the already exoticized cultures in eliciting global and Western marketing appeals. (See Said 1978; Savigliano 1995.)

<sup>58</sup> Sheldon Pollock's article "Cosmopolitanisms" refers cosmopolitical thoughts as a national ideology that promotes the cosmopolitan living of cultural pluralism and its presumed ethically synchronous and politically symmetrical structure. Migrants, refugees, and peoples of the diasporas represent the spirit of the cosmopolitical community – a constructed social icon of cultural difference and trans-disciplinary co-existence framed by national sovereignty and international politics. (See Pollock et al 2000, 581-582.)

emotively resonant. In this case, using my dance practitioner-researcher self to reflect on the researched helps conduct and digest a study that is “in relation to” but “not on behalf of” the studied (Trinh 1997, 418; cf. p. 11). The ancestral-genealogic sameness attributes cultural intuitions and sensitivities toward specific creative aspects and artistic grounds shared in our works, and an innate comprehension of the differing placial upbringings and native encounters that distinguish our choreographic approaches and products. Forasmuch as this research journey unravels, I recognize that our choreographies are at length “glocalized” art forms of local cultural features and global receptive trends produced in the (conscious or subconscious) third space of diasporic Canada. In such manner, the works embodying Bhabha’s conception of “cultural in-between-ness” instigate the cultural-artistic translation, interpretation, and negotiation in effecting the dance (re) appropriations and identity reinventions synopsized as Chinese-Canadian. The bonding or intermixing of Chinese with Other Canadian cultural traits and diverse artistries in this North American diasporic event constitutes the hybrid identities in question – my note of a Canadian “multicultural” identity “in progress,” or in (cultural-artistic) “becoming,” as invoked by the Toronto-Vancouver dance analogue.

### **PART I: Choreographing Toronto – a Local Route of Mixed Celebrations**

As a traditional Chinese dance artist living in the premier Canadian multicultural city of Toronto, I recognize that just the traditional Chinese dance vocabulary is not sufficient to express my individual self and dance experiences. From observing dancing students in my Visual Arts undergraduate days at York University, to becoming a dance student and dancer-choreographer after my BFA graduation, I have continued to practice and reflect on my dance texts and creations to the artistic call of “what lies beyond” that dance instinct of mine. Intensive

traditional Chinese dance training at the Central University of Nationalities in China<sup>59</sup> was just the beginning of the quest. Dance and administrative collaborations with Torontonians arts organizations including the former National Ballet of Canada Community Outreach Department, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra Chamber Music Group, the Earth Spirit (Native Indigenous and Diverse Cultural) Arts Festival Committee, and international dance performances-research participations between the 1990s and 2010s, have been instrumental in inspiring me to gaze beyond the Chinese dance circuit. I have sensed the urge to move on with my own dance voice since the late 1990s – for that (somewhat missing) confirmation of both “self” and “dance” identities. Resigning from my co-artistic directorship with the former Chinarts Dance Associations then, I have worked the dual role of an independent Chinese dancer-cultural researcher, producing a collaborative dance collection with and about various migrant cultures along a Torontonians *route* of intercultural artistic creations. Part I of this chapter is dedicated to examining a selected few in that collection – the third-space and global-local constituents that manifest concertedly with my hyphenated stance of (Hong Kong) Chinese-Canadian-ness.

*Apart yet Together – a Chinese-Indian-Korean Dance Experience* (Fig. 6) conceived and created for Canada’s Year of Asia Pacific (1997) premiered in Toronto in 1998.<sup>60</sup> As the project’s producer and traditional Chinese dancer-choreographer, I initiated a cross-cultural artistic venture with Toronto-based dance collaborators, namely Mi Young Kim (South Korean), Lata Pada (South Indian/Bharata Natyam), and guest artist Ruo Chun Nie (Chinese ethnic/Chao Sien). It was a pure and simple intent to provide for the audience some artistic-historical

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<sup>59</sup> The university located in Beijing specializes in the teaching and research of traditional dances, music, and languages of China’s mainstream (Han) and 55 other ethnic nationalities. While the Beijing Dance Academy maintains an institutional representation of Chinese classical dance, the Central University of Nationalities maintains one of Chinese traditional “nationality” dance.

<sup>60</sup> The production was originally planned to be staged in celebration of Canada’s Year of Asia Pacific in 1997. Due to the amalgamation of the Greater City of Toronto and significant arts funding reductions in the same year, its presentation was postponed until 1998 in enabling pre-performance fundraising and further funding applications.

education on the featured migrated dance heritages and their becoming in such a diverse creative niche as Toronto. The choreographic theme of “Togetherness – the culturally diverse style” denotes, in addition to the placial identity of mosaic Toronto, my hyphenated Chinese-Canadian identity sharing and dancing the third space with Other Torontonians migrant and hyphenated cultures. In discussing the third-space and glocal implications of the work, I will focus on the finale with the same title as the production (*Apart yet Together*). A synoptic representation of the full-scale repertoire, it expresses the distinct and comparative Chinese, Indian and Korean dance traditions of Canadian socio-cultural impacts – the self and Other identities *en* Toronto *route* to cultural celebrations and joint artistic explorations.

Performed to a mini live orchestra of gu-zheng (Chinese harp), yang-qin (Chinese dulcimer), Indian flute, mridangam (South Indian drum), and janggu (Korean hourglass drum), the piece is conceptually ambitious but creatively stimulating among participating dance and music collaborators. The choreographers-dancers in culture-specific dance costumes, besides choreographing and performing traditional steps to their own cultural music and drumming, are beckoned to transverse their cultural grounds and artistic boundaries in dancing to improvised music and drumming of one another’s cultures. The creative process engages the common artistic ground of rhythm/meter propellants intrinsic to the featured dance traditions of Uyghur,<sup>61</sup> Bharata Natyam,<sup>62</sup> Chao Sien,<sup>63</sup> and Korean, thus enabling the movements of these respective

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<sup>61</sup> The (Chinese) Uyghur is a Turkic-Islamic community that emigrated from the Middle East between 420 and 588 A.D. to settle in Western China – an area defined nowadays as the Xin Jiang Autonomous Region. The group constitutes one of China’s 55 minority nationalities (Chen, K. 1992, 9).

<sup>62</sup> A major genre of Indian classical dance originated from the Tamil Nadu – one of the 29 states of India. Traditionally performed by female soloists expressing South Indian religious themes and spiritual ideas, the form is dedicated to the reverence of major Hindu gods and goddesses especially Shiva, Vishnu and Devi. (Chaturvedi 2007, pp. 12, 15-17; Schechner c1985, pp. 65-66.)

<sup>63</sup> An old name for “Korea,” Chao Sien refers to migrants of Korean ancestry living in China as a Chinese minority nationality since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. To date, the Chao Sien nationality populates mostly the Yanbian Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin Province in North Eastern China (Chen, K. 1992, 10). Developed from the Korean dance tradition, the Chao Sien dance style demonstrates the same core technique of “breathing” in initiating and guiding every movement.

cultures and artistic origins to complement and communicate, and the intuitive re-creations of individual and group dance steps performed to the piece's invocative music and percussion.

In an open and fluid third space between cultures, Pada the Bharata Natyam dancer and I the Uygur dancer execute our rhythmic movements of innate pulsations to an innovative sonic mixture of Anna Guo's yang-qin and Shri Gowrishanker's mridangam in interpreting the cultural-artistic exchanges between China and India along the ancient Chinese Silk Road.<sup>64</sup> As my storytelling hand gestures translate the Uygur aesthetics of decorative Muslim architectural designs, elaborative floral images, and soft, silky costumes, Pada responds with her ornate bodily interpretation of Vishnu-revered Indian spiritual devotions and ritualistic symbols – a meeting interweaving our Uygur and Bharata Natyam steps and meanings within a reciprocating musical pattern of Chinese dulcimer and South Indian drumming notes. Displaying a different set of historic-artistic connection, Kim the Korean dancer and Nie the Chao Sien dancer converse in Korean breathing movements impelled by Charles Hong's soul-penetrating janggu beats, and transcended, meanwhile, by Ting Hong's celestial gu-zheng interludes. The dancers' airy and willowy hands and their tender, breath-charged figures moving graciously in uniformed coherency to the Korean drum-Chinese harp duo is no coincidence but a reflection of an age-old Korean diasporic migration constituting the Chinese minority dance style of Chao Sien. The common dance source and essence become especially amplified when, toward the ending of this segment, the two dancers swirl ever gently and compliantly to stage centre to join hands shaped after a closed circle – in their slowly descending, conjoint traditional crouch symbolic of a

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<sup>64</sup> The Silk Road originally constructed to export silk from China to Persia and the Roman Empire during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) reached its cultural-economic climax by the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.). Cultural-artistic interchanges between Chinese merchants and craftsmen and their Central Asian and European counterparts along this prosperous route led to considerable sharing and cross-fertilizations of dance and music, notably with the Persian and Indian cultures highly involved in and affected by the silk trade (Feng 2002, 4).

Korean reunion.

Perhaps more artistically risky is when all four dancers-choreographers strive to maintain their culture-specific dance movements and gestures throughout the piece – whether to improvising instruments of their own cultures, or to those of the different collaborative cultures. The perceived or felt artistic risk, nevertheless, disintegrate as soon as the team engages in the creative-and-performance process. I attribute the practical occurrence to the common characteristic of the four dance traditions’ rhythmic-meter precisions as expressed through the instrumental accompaniments. It is hence a logical and spontaneous performance onset that our Uygur, Bharata Natyam, Korean, and Chao Sien rhythmic-meter oriented dance bodies aptly react or comfortably adapt to the distinct Indian and Korean drumming rhythms, likewise the metric Chinese harp and dulcimer melodies overlapping or underlying the drumming duo. Alongside Ajanthie Mathanakaran’s crisp and concise Indian flute overture and its thematic refrains through the various segments, these percussive and rhythmic instruments accompany the dancers’ creative steps generated one after another’s iconic poses or gestural pauses, their movements in sync with each other’s traditional texts, and their corporeal fabrications of linear or circular patterns in a vigorous group conversation of dance histories, cultural symbols, and traditional metaphors. The intercultural music-and-percussion gradually climaxes to find the individual dancers, while demonstrating their specific steps in diverse and shimmering traditional attires from the four stage corners, execute progressive spins toward stage centre to freeze like a multi-coloured coral formation at the musicians’ one final compounded symphonic strike.

Characterized by dance movements and musical instruments of the three cultures of China, India and Korea, the collaborating artists present a sense of “oneness” onstage. I perceive the effect as a version of acculturation – not through blurring or interfusing but by “bringing

together” these similar and differing movement texts and origins in explorative reference to Toronto’s historic-culturally enriching and artistically inspiring visage. On a performative level, the dancers’ cultural and dance frames tend to dissolve when dancing together. Just as artistic similarities flow naturally from past historical links between the featured dance cultures, creative gaps resulting from cultural differences are instantaneously bridged by the consistently evocative and stimulating musical and percussive prompts. Reflecting on this work now, I observe in it a choreographic identification of mosaic Toronto, the project artists’ diasporic identities as diverse Torontonians in creative collaboration, and the artistic choices and chances involved in the moments of third-space creativity.

Recalling my past Beijing experiences as a Chinese dance student and cultural observer in the 1990s, I trace in the production’s epitomizing finale a diaspora-driven “acculturative attitude” developed off the praxis of “rebound” – as illustrated in the bonding of distinct and intact dance traditions performed even more faithfully on the Toronto diasporic than Chinese ancestral soil. In gathering and re-presenting the various featured cultural-artistic characteristics as one choreography without compromising origins, it serves my artistic mandate of promoting Chinese and Other Asian migrant dance-and-music cultures in the Western diasporic place of mosaic Toronto. This alternate manner of acculturation over mere creative disciplinary interfusions, however conscious a response to our Toronto-based multiple and collaborative cultural identities, may also be a subconscious answer to my Beijing cultural encounters in that era, during which Chinese dance students and artists from professional dance institutions and companies were eager to incorporate Western or Euro-American values and dance elements (e.g. break dance and hip-hop) in their new works. Mounting the production is for me a personal *route* to continue or commemorate the originally learnt and cultivated in a meaningful way, and

to indicate that “something new and special” may also manifest through “re-conceptualizing and re-visualizing” intact movement traditions. The latter, as I experience, occurs primarily within that fluid and constructive third space between the collaborative cultures.

My artistic collaborators’ mention of the “space and time given” in completing and learning from the project at a post-production sharing still resonates in my mind and heart. The “space and time given” that I initially interpreted as the (funded and donated) stage and rehearsal spaces, rehearsal plus administrative hours are, in a lapse of two decades, presently reconsidered and elaborated through my dance studies lens as the “third space” open for explorations between cultures, and the temporal linkage of our contemporary artistic beings with ancestral traditions in that space – for all choreographers-dancers and musicians concerned.

It is really that third/culturally in-between space that has enabled my production of a placial acculturation as such in making sense of the diverse city-diaspora of Toronto and its artistic (dance-and-music) inspirations and possibilities. It is also my personal and my artistic collaborators’ diasporic locations in this third space (linking or existing between our cultures) that help map and plough the alternate or new artistic *routes* in connecting, re-discovering, and re-articulating our identities signified by hyphens in the Toronto cosmopolitan arena – as revealed by the dance subtitle of *a Chinese-Indian-Korean Dance Experience*. Singling out my own experience on this production concept, it is ultimately the third and hyphenated space between my Chinese heritage and adopted Canadian culture that leads to the dance celebration of an ancestral cultural-artistic lineage and a diasporic creative togetherness in the Canadian multicultural regime. I had not quite contemplated on the deeper meaning of the “space and time given” as much as I do now in revisiting this past production, that it is actually about an acquired Toronto cultural space that continues to influence, summon, and re-create identities and artistries



in a time zone cross-referencing migrant histories and contemporary socio-artistic developments.

The linking of global migrant narratives and performance artistries in depicting my own dance experiences and visions in a diverse Toronto locale recapitulates an emerging choreographer's close to idyllic translation-interpretation of the lived Chinese diasporic milieu at the time. The notion of "the global linking with the local," therefore, imbeds itself most appropriately (without my initial consciousness) as a project frame. The bonding of Asian Pacific dance-and-music migrants from a historic-traditionally fertile part of the globe potentiates cultural depths and creative sparks for social-economic receptivity in Toronto's multicultural locality. I remember just how grateful and relieved I was as the producer in witnessing the diverse audience members, either related to the project artists, or interested in our culture-specific artistries, attending and supporting the performance. The scene, after all these years, reveals the Toronto dance stage as a metaphoric third space operating between global migrant forces and relative local cultural-creative performances that contribute to the artistic and educational accesses of local Torontonians viewers.

Global migrant cultures featured in local Canadian dance expressions, and the third space/cultural in-between-ness engaged in reinventing self through relating to Other identities deemed (hyphenated) Canadian, remain the artistic *route* dovetailing my choreographic works. *Behind Silk Ribbons & Rebozos* (Fig. 7) choreographed with Mexican-Indigenous dance theatre artist Norma Araiza in 2001, is a production that further explores this diasporic identity dynamic *en Toronto route* for artistic togetherness and reinventions. Originally conceived with the working title of *Our Stories-Our Paths*, the work presents two seemingly unconnected cultures of Chinese and Mexican-Indigenous origins – a dance encounter and choreographic experimentation enfolding the transformation of our individual cultural identities along personal

and shared artistic paths. The incisive cultural differences and creative risks generate the excited desire to move beyond my own and familiar cultural zones for the novel or undiscovered. The project might have sounded like an artistic “mission impossible” to many, it is regardless realized – through that creatively fluid and inspiring third space between inherent and diasporic cultural existentialities.

The third space between Chinese ancestral and Mexican-Indigenous cultures enables a state of acculturation that departs from the diasporic attributes of “rebound” as traced through *Apart yet Together*. In using the Chinese ribbons and Mexican rebozos (shawls) as thematic props of a cultural association and dialogue, Araiza and I present our cultural commonality of legendary and mythic veneration. The production is performed to live traditional instruments with an improvisational twist – the debuting fusion of Toronto-born Chinese musician Patty Chan’s er-hu (Chinese violin) and Mexican classical guitarist Jorge Lopez’s free-styled arrangements. An intertextual repertoire enlisting the dance theatre elements of traditional stories, movement metaphors, spoken verses, cultural fabrics, and interpretive accompaniments to portray the “artistic becoming” in between ancestral traits and diasporic affects, it relates my and Araiza’s identity *route* reinventions in the third space interfacing global-local cultural forces and creative incentives.

Here again, the Toronto dance stage assumes the technical third-space platform and meeting place to strike an otherwise unlikely dialogue between such distinct ancestral and mythical figures as the Mexican-Indigenous Pascola<sup>65</sup> (sacred clown) and Chinese apsara<sup>66</sup> (flying

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<sup>65</sup> A sacred jester figure performed in Pueblo Indian religious rituals in New Mexico and South Western United States, delivering social commentary via humour. In anthropological perspective, the Pascola is a pragmatic ritualistic character that can help defuse community tensions in interpreting popular tribal culture, reinforcing taboos, and communicating traditions (Bandelier 1918, web).

<sup>66</sup> A flying Buddhist celestial depicted as sole or group immortals on the Dunhuang cave murals of 1600 years found in the ancient Silk Road grottoes spanning the Han, Tang and subsequent dynasties (206 B.C.– 907 A. D. and beyond). The figure is

Buddhist celestial), the Yaqui deer<sup>67</sup> and Chinese Dai fish,<sup>68</sup> or the Yaqui shaman<sup>69</sup> and Mongolian shepherdess.<sup>70</sup> The thematic concept and relevant movement-and-music dramas are particularly vivid throughout the repertoire's latter half titled "From Heaven to Earth" – the focal piece of my analysis. Reinforcing the repertory theme, it opens with subtle clear light revealing two long fabric paths – one of Chinese silk ribbons from downstage right, the other of Mexican shawls from downstage left, with the ends of each forming a meeting point at downstage centre. The metaphoric image introduces my and Araiza's entries as Chinese and Mexican-Indigenous dance figures from either side of the downstage corners. Treading slowly and cautiously along our representative pathways toward each other, we try to speak in each other's (native) language until we meet at downstage centre – asking a simultaneous question (in English): "What are you trying to say?" The spoken theatrical texts dissolve into our alternate bodily movements signifying the daughters of "the dragon and the phoenix, the land of silk" (symbolic of China), and of "the austere deserts where reviving cactus and myths sustain" (symbolic of Mexico). It is in this "centre stage" space that I locate a cultural-artistically concrete third space, where Araiza and I begin our dance conversation and journey that embody the various myths and legends across Chinese and Mexican lands.

It is not an incident of immediate bonding and crossing-over: like all third-space elements, it

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depicted in forms of celestial musicians or benevolent spirits of water and clouds flying with swerving scarf-like ribbons, bestowing Buddhist blessings and protections to the earth below (Dunhuang Research Academy 2014, web).

<sup>67</sup> The Yaquis are part of the southwestern Native American culture-group living in the Sonoran desert on the west coast of northern Mexico. The deer is an animal figure commonly depicted in Yaqui folklores as a symbol of strength, endurance, innocence, and alertness (Giddings 1959, web).

<sup>68</sup> A celebrated dance token of life, abundance, and prosperity for the Chinese Dai minority nationality inhabiting the Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province in southwestern China (Chen, K. 1992, 10, 204).

<sup>69</sup> Originated with the ancient Toltecs, a witch/sorcerer exercising shamanism in various Mexican Indian tribes including the Yaqui. The figure is referred as a higher state of being and awareness that can transmigrate from a human form into a bird or an animal (Traditional Indigenous American Values 2006, web).

<sup>70</sup> A Mongolian dance icon of female strength and robustness in pastoral wilderness.

takes the temporal transition to connect and amalgamate. Re-creating a dance soliloquy with long, light silk ribbons depicting a flying, cloud-borne Chinese Buddhist apsara to traditional er-hu music of a sweet, gentle grandeur, I provoke Araiza's responsive solo of a re-casted rebozo-clad Pueblo Pascola moving with accentuated limbs and lower abdominal twists – a witty and clownish immortal presence enhanced by an equally witty and playful classical guitar adaptation. A testing of the third-space water between the two different cultures is then exercised via a sweeping ribbon-and-rebozo interplay conducted by our respective Chinese and Mexican-Indigenous hand and corporeal movements. Intercepted by my theatric bodily image of an opening blossom arising from a winding country path of floor-draped ribbons, and Araiza's of a hypnotized butterfly steering toward me (the blossom) under an extensive, wing-like rebozo spread bilaterally, the episode to light-hearted er-hu-classical guitar duo eventuates a slow, melodious expression, then a momentary pause as we perform an opposing waist-bending pose at downstage centre. From both physical and symbolic perspectives, the pause suggests a culturally and artistically interactive third space ready for action – with Araiza wrapping the rebozo over her upper body mimicking a deer's hide, and my flipping the ribbons on both sides in continuous circular motions echoing swirling waves.

A third space linking and operating between cultural traditions and mythologies is solidly visible in Araiza's transformation into a Yaqui deer versus mine into a Dai fish, when the dancing continues and acculturating process motivates the translation-interpretation of a rendezvous between these animal figures. The Dai fish as a symbol of life and abundance for all Chinese especially the Dai ethnic cultures, and the Yaqui deer as a representation of strength, endurance, and innocence in Mexican-Indigenous (Pueblo) folklores are called to dance together for a significant cultural reason. In this account, the two figures are staged as “dialoguing”

human ideologies of two specific cultures, expressed via our dance movements as a form of “artistic linkage” based on the understanding of our own and of each other’s cultural values and beliefs. Shedding the ribbons off my forearms and skipping out of the ribbon puddle shaped like a ruffled pond on the stage floor, I become the Dai fish associating and conversing with Araiza the Yaqui deer-passerby drinking from the pond. The acculturated aesthetics danced unfold similar human values and aspirations between two very different cultures as the animal duet and embodied meanings proceed – percussively endorsed by Chan’s rhythmic beats on the Chinese Mu Yu (wood box)<sup>71</sup> in articulating the fish’s twisting-flapping movement accents, and Lopez’s tactile pounding on the Yaqui water drum<sup>72</sup> signifying the deer’s heartbeats. The third space located between cultures and illustrative dance-music expressions, at that point, reflects a creative quality that is diversely and fluidly vibrant in delivering the onstage performatives.

As if a reincarnation is taking place on that third-space stage, a concurrent, doubly-resonating punch on the Chinese wood box and Yaqui water drum activates the split-second theatrical switch of my role from the Dai fish to a Mongolian shepherdess, and Araiza’s play of the Yaqui deer to that of Charmana – the Yaqui shaman with the sorcery power to change to a bird or an animal. Frequently portrayed in Mongolian and Mexican-Indigenous dance traditions, both legendary characters represent some form of earthly power and benevolent beings. Immersed in Chan’s and Lopez’s surprisingly attuned and melodious er-hu-classical guitar collaboration titled *Ribbons & Rebozos*, Araiza’s outstretched shamanic hands with open, quivering fingers toward the ground elicit my rise from a kneeling, sheep-tending pose with

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<sup>71</sup> Literally called “wood fish,” the Mo Yu is a partially hollowed-out wood block that vibrates a peculiar knocking sound when hammered (Chinese Instruments 2017, web). The percussion is widely used in traditional Chinese theatre such as Beijing and Cantonese operas in highlighting or accentuating specific steps and dramatic gestures.

<sup>72</sup> The Yaqui water drum, an American Indian percussive instrument, is a half gourd that floats like a bubble on a tub of water. The outer round surface of the gourd is struck with a drum stick, using the tub of water as a resonator in amplifying the vibrations (Koskoff 2001, web).

Mongolian shaking shoulders.<sup>73</sup>

The segment can be viewed as a third-space conjuration of acculturated vignettes. There is one with Araiza's sorcery bird-wing arms shuddering and hovering from behind to prod an ascending eagle-wing hand movement of alternate accentuations in my Mongolian shepherdess impersonation. There is another with Araiza and me treading the deer steps cautiously together, until we execute an almost identical Chinese traditional and Mexican-Indigenous archery dance pose at upstage centre – an aesthetic commonality directed and ready for the lighted path ahead. The interfacing Chinese er-hu and Mexican guitar rhapsodies accompany our forward-moving dance bodies adapted from each other's traditional expressions, quoting my transformation of Araiza's sacred-clown hand gestures flickering like candle flames to the Chinese Buddhist apsara's earth-blessing *orchid fingers*,<sup>74</sup> or Araiza's extraction of my Mongolian horse-riding motions to energize her original Yaqui deer prancing. The path danced together as a parallel, coherent movement entity reveals the intercultural and inter-changing qualities occurring in a third space notched within Toronto's living multiculturalism, where translation and negotiation of choreographic steps and meanings validate dance acculturation between ethnicities.

I suggest that third-space acculturated dynamics in this production are prevalent in both the dance and music performed as inter-generative momentums. The integration of live Chinese er-hu and Mexican guitar music and percussions, as discussed, diffuses innate culture-specific qualities and textures that present a mini East-West harmonic concerto. The musical repertory components are created to follow and reflect the movements. In this approach, the choreographic process tends to be spontaneous and free of compositional framing or constriction.

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<sup>73</sup> An iconic shoulder movement related to bodily motions on horseback in Mongolian dance.

<sup>74</sup> A Chinese female hand gesture that presses inward the thumb and middle finger while extending outward all other fingers to suggest the image of opening orchid petals. The gesture is prevalent in traditional Chinese performances notably dance and theatre.

Rendering a heart-stirring aura that enhances the danced subjects and emotional associations, the musicians provide a transcending, carefree and open aural concept for us as dancers-choreographers. The concluding episode, for instance, presents a free and fluid interpretation of our cultural-artistic status to the continuous, free-styled and frolicsome expressions of the er-hu-guitar duo. A structural improvisation of the long, alluring ribbons and the wide, veering rebozo in our hands or on our bodies sweeps through and across the inventive musical sphere, until the metaphoric construction of a bonded partnership at stage centre. The imagery of the floor-bound, horizontally-spread rebozo chauffeured by Araiza from one end, and the whirly ribbons relentlessly flipped in my reclining position upon the rebozo from the other, marks the repertoire's "endless" end – an open space for the audience members' further interpretation as the stage light fades. The open dance attitude echoed by the open duo accompaniments of our different and collaborating cultures confirms the third-space characteristic of mosaic Toronto. It signals the "unfinished" *routes* (Gilroy, xi; 19) with unending artistic possibilities that continue to shape and process diasporic identities and art forms – in a third, culturally in-between space that exhorts transcultural dialoguing as it effects dance-and-music acculturation.

*Behind Silk Ribbons & Rebozos* is precisely about my hyphenated (Hong Kong) Chinese-Canadian identity and its transforming *route* in relation with another like Araiza's Mexican-Indigenous-Canadian. The *route*, as noted earlier, is metaphorically represented by the hyphen in between cultures in the adoptive Canadian diaspora. The *route* signifies both social and artistic changes, and indicates open chances of cultural interlinks, creative explorations, and acculturative undertakings. It is a "travelled" third space in which to initiate a new articulation or reinterpretation of my Chinese diasporic identity in the midst of Canadian Otherness. As reflected in the production, it induces an artistic choice to experience and create from differing

dance-and-music possibilities presaging the historic-cultural totems of Chinese ancestral and Mexican-Indigenous origins in a contemporary Toronto cosmopolitan setting.

Outside of personal and choreographic choices, my instinctive urge for “diasporic relevancy” in the lived Canadian social modernity compels this spontaneous move beyond Chinese ancestral cultures and dance traditions. Reviewing the production here and now, I realize that the move was basically place-driven, being part of my identity search for apt and alternate expressions in the multicultural creative environs of Toronto. It reflects the remoulding of the “fixed, stable and homogenous” (Sarup, 57) to suggest a new identification of the cultural and artistic self in the situated diaspora. In using the Chinese traditional dance ribbons and traditional-evolved movements to express my contemporary Canadian living, and to dialogue creatively with Araiza’s Mexican rebozos and Yaqui traditions re-created as her contemporary dance theatrical language, I locate our “homonym routes” (Gilroy, xi) in the process of diasporic relocation and identity transformation. As culturally distinct artists trekking a common artistic path based on individual histories and cultural origins, we continue to express our contemporary diasporic Canadian living as we rebuild our (cultural and dance) identities.

In conceiving and mounting the Toronto production with a Mexican-Indigenous collaborator, I see a newly-ploughed Canadian trail of integrating Chinese traditional movement concepts and expressions with the cultural-artistic heritage of a different Torontonians migrant counterpart. If I were to define a cultural identity for my choreographic approach, I would interpret it as a “Chinese-Canadian” identity “in the making” – an experiential development along the dance *route* of Canadian cosmopolitan diversity and socio-cultural inspirations. The hyphen in between Chinese and Canadian, as exemplified in this collaboration, reaffirms the (third) spatial link to Other cultures, artistic choices, and social chances. It is also my perception



of a mobile *route* to discovering a changing, hybridized Chinese identity of Canadian multicultural impacts and dynamics. “Since it is a perfect metaphor of multiculturalism and how to negotiate it, it will be great to carry on this conversation at certain points, over the course of a certain period, just to let the audience see ‘where’ you are at” (Todd, email, 10/8/2001). I cannot be more agreeable to dance critic Rebecca Todd’s post-performance comment – an insight accenting the work’s implication of continued identity reinventions in line with the ever changing mosaic and diverse properties of our diasporic Toronto habitat.

Adding the Mexican-Indigenous culture to my repertory list of diverse collaborations, I perceive *Behind Silk Ribbons & Rebozos* as a globally-linked and inspired performance produced on the local Toronto cultural-artistic platform. In tracing my choreographic track and initiative, I detect a logical and subconscious influence from attending a Moroccan-Flemish contemporary dance theatre performance in London, England while travelling through Western Europe in the late 1990s. I recollect my emotive captivation by the British dance company’s sustenance of such artistic and cultural integrities through choreographing a British contemporary movement-based repertoire to the distinct sonic partnership of varied North African stringed and percussive instruments. The presentation felt decidedly contemporary British to me – however, with a tinge of “more” and “somewhere beyond.” I began to realize during the show that it was the magic of acculturated identities as “one artistic entity” – very much so a creative product of London’s cosmopolitan society. The choreographer of mixed Dutch-Moroccan descent – the key figure for this seamless intermixture of British-based Euro-North African artistic elements – must have sown the inspirational seed attributing my Toronto/Canadian production of cultural links and artistic integrations with Araiza. Strictly speaking, it is the global cultural and artistic characteristics (of British, Dutch, and Moroccan origins) assimilated in a city like London that

strike a conceptual connection with the local Torontonion multicultural dance-and-music experience. It witnesses, after all, the latent but vibrant third space linking and operating between global and local cultures and performing arts – the driving factor *Behind* our cultural apparatuses of the *Silk Ribbons & Rebozos* that enables the sharing of our identity stories with the audience.

Third-space characteristics of cultural bonding and intersection continue to evolve via my Torontonion dance expression, with *Ending an Arabic Fable* produced in 2008 (Fig. 8) as a significant milestone. Distinct from all other previous productions of acculturating traditional concepts and movements, the work manifests an intrinsic third space (in the subconscious mind) in fleshing out corporeal enactments of self-synthesized cultural elements. It features a creative state that I address as “self-acculturation.”<sup>75</sup> As a process-immersed choreographer-performer, I see a spontaneous yet subtle integration of the differing cultural and artistic data within my individual dance body for a unique personal dance text and movement style. From sociological and artistic perspectives, it is a solo exploration of my own cultural identity (in the presence of “another”), and my specific dance direction impacted by Canadian multiculturalism – essentially its constituted third space existing between migrated and mainstream cultures.

Self-acculturation as self-synthesized cultural and creative multiplicities posts another of my Toronto-ignited dance endeavours in the third space. It materializes in a choreographic initiative occurring in a Chinese restaurant in uptown Toronto, in a city section where Middle Eastern white-collar migrants have started to settle. “I’ll tell you the beginning of my story, maybe you’ll dance the end of it.” Coinciding with a dazed, vulnerable gaze on his tea cup, this remark from a newly arrived Palestinian friend sharing the dining table sparks off my dance

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<sup>75</sup> My reinvented term based on Gertrude Kurath’s explication of dance acculturation. (See Footnote 2.)

journey – one presenting my dual/acculturative role as an acquainted (Chinese) confidante-dance interpreter of the (Palestinian) story told. First-hand details and choreographic respectfulness lead to my decision to perform the story with no other dance collaborators. The project’s “exclusive” creative process has since remained my inquiry of a new ground and perception on choreographic and scholarly rudiments.

ending an Arabic fable

a heart bruised from love-coated poisons and thorny traps ...  
a spirit lost amidst desert sand and foreign dust ...  
for the gasping heart and spirit –  
a silk ribbon tossed in windy darkness,  
leaving a quiet trail to the differed rhythms and music of life –  
a dance with no end ...

(Program Notes, 03/02/2008)

The project is conceived along this poetic synopsis – a thematic verse composed from my understanding of the Palestinian story. A migrant character trapped between Middle Eastern values and Western contemporary attitudes, traditional critiques and modern waywardness, it epitomizes a soul lost in between two worlds – the native and the diasporic. A (Hong Kong) Chinese passer-by and listener translating-interpreting in the third space between my native and the Other/Middle Eastern cultures, I take on the Palestinian character’s cultural collision and personality crisis with converged Chinese traditional steps, Middle Eastern movement energy, and contemporary creative imagery in attempting a therapeutic consolation and support – as indicated by the tossed ribbon trail to a renewing world of alternative rhythms and music.

Crossing back and forth in a third space between Chinese and Middle Eastern cultural-artistic boundaries, I dance a typical migrant experience trapped between the Palestinian self and Other Canadian contemporary values. In my solo performance as the storyteller, the intensely

troubled and emotional Palestinian encounter is expressed to the live entwinements of Chinese and Arabic instruments – the er-hu (Chinese violin), oud (Arabic lute), doumbeck (Arabic drum), deff (Chinese Uyгур framed drum), riqq (Arabic tambourine), and Arabic base drum. Onstage, accompaniments of these instruments are indispensable in sustaining the drama and contextual expressivity of the production. From an artistically viable point of departure, my sole dance body interpreting more than one character and one culture calls for the support of relevant cultural music notes and rhythms to deliver a vivid and convincing performance. Since it is a solo dance project committed to assimilating in the third space the interactive Chinese corporeal symbols and Palestinian emotions, live musicians and percussionists of the featured cultures make the attempted assimilation and the creation-performance of many transitional movements, intuitive gestures, and specific imagery choreographically “workable.”

Behind the scenes, the project’s self-acculturative process in the third space assumes a theatrical nature. Like an actor seeking inspiration to portray a particular character by first immersing herself in the character’s experience and situation, I travelled to Jordan – the character’s birthplace – to acquire a deeper knowledge of his ethnographic and cultural traits. Focused observation on Middle Eastern cultural dance in the country and peripheral regions at the time helps create the project’s movement aesthetics of merging traditional Chinese and contemporary bodily expressions with a Middle Eastern dance energy initiated from a constantly twisting and revolving lower abdomen. The third-space chemistry of binding and reshaping different cultural-corporeal entities reveals Chinese as the core and predominant vocabulary and Middle Eastern as a subtly ingrained essence substantiating the dance context.

Traditional Chinese movements implicative of my “storyteller-interpreter” role and a subdued Middle Eastern dance energy indicating the “Palestinian-protagonist” presence perform

unitarily and intermittently in interrelating the two (cultural-artistic) states of being. The creative approach is, to an extent, inspired by classical Greek theatre,<sup>76</sup> where multiple characters are often performed by an individual actor “playing” different personalities and crossing between different places and times on the same stage space. The production from conception to performance suggests a trans-disciplinary experimentation of poly cultural artistries extending from Chinese, Arabic, to ancient Greek. A “given” (cf. p. 105) in-between experience in multicultural Toronto and its mosaic structure of co-existing cultural and artistic heritages, it spins the repertory tapestry that redefines my vision of “Canadian” dance creations as ethnically diverse aside from a Euro-American ballet and contemporary dance lineage.

In identifying *Ending an Arabic Fable* as Chinese-Canadian through self-acculturation and interfused art forms relevant to Torontonians cultures, my study spotlights repertory excerpts that implicate a routing Chinese-ness and pertinent choreographic transformations occurring in the third space between Chinese ancestral selfness and diasporic Canadian Otherness. In this dance story of Chinese and Palestinian co-enactments, the pragmatic and symbolic musical components are what I deem “vital and generative” in engendering the conceptual, choreographic, and performative. The self-acculturated work, in my rethinking, is hardly a sole dance matter, but a manifestation of dance making music, and music making dance – a visual-audio fusion and cross-mobilization of the two disciplines in constituting a holistic artistic statement: the mixed diasporic realities of the blessed versus the doomed.

The third-space dialogue between dance and music of Chinese and Arabic distinctness is observed, for example, in the opening section entitled “Unspoken,” where my squatted dance

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<sup>76</sup> The inspiration originates from my academic participation in a group performance of the ancient Greek chorus as envisaged by the first major Greek tragedian Aeschylus. The project was under the interpretive directorship of Regina Kapetenaki, choreographer for The National Theatre of Greece and visiting artist-professor in residence at York University’s Theatre Department in 2007. The music-dance-theatre performance to live traditional Greek and contemporary Eastern European instruments (by local Torontonians musicians) presents the common Greek theatrical feature of engaging individual actors of certain roles to duo-play other influential or major characters in the same or different scenes enacted.

body playing the Palestinian character is encased in a silk ribbon cocoon at upstage centre. Moving and oozing to guitarist-percussionist Jaro Dabrowski's sporadic oud squeals and fragmented riqq jingling echoing an emotionally difficult Middle Eastern experience, my restrictive and stimuli-grasping body struggles out of the ribbon cocoon upon ridding its tail-end used as a head shroud. As the oud-riqq duo fades off to give way to a sad, solitary er-hu sequence by string musician Patty Chan, my restless movements gradually turn collected, poised and gentle – an indicative transformation of the Palestinian Other played to my Chinese “storyteller” self. In this musically evoked introductory section and the episodes that follow, I am able to move in and out of my self-role as the Chinese storyteller-interpreter and the dramatized Palestinian character through transitioning or interrelated musical and percussive arrangements. Dancing the unspoken through the aurally graphic expressions of the Arabic oud-riqq-Chinese er-hu sequel, my self-acculturated performance in the third space (between Self and the Other cultural figure) is able to assume artistic legitimacy and the desired theatrical flows in processing the story.

Self-acculturated movements conveying the Palestinian Other's various emotional stages in the same third space, in an accelerating and acutely enhancive mode, are transcribed accordingly by percussionist Debashis Sinha's diverse Arabic drumming rhythms in the second/final section of the work. Bearing the same project title of *Ending an Arabic Fable*, the finale recounting a Middle Eastern migration animates specific and momentous phases of the West-bound experience via reciprocating dance and percussive expressions. In response to a steady and heavy processional Arabic drumming series, my portrayal of the Palestinian character keeps moving forward with an extensively long Chinese ribbon dragging behind my back. The Chinese dance ribbon and the Arabic rhythms engaged herein present as interinvolved third-space

cultural icons in indicating the (Chinese) storytelling of a long (Arabic) migratory road of decisiveness, and of nostalgic loads carried over from the departed home soil.

The section reveals my slow, elastic, and directional pulls or glides with an understated Middle Eastern energy aesthetic generated from consistent pelvic undulations. Toward the middle portion, the movements turn unprecedentedly light, bouncy and explorative with such creative ribbon-corporeal imagery as rope skipping, or a clownish gymnastic back bend on the stage floor in reaching the eventually slashed off, fallen ribbon. In place of the preceding processional beats of ritualistic orderliness, a mixed doumbeck-deff medley of fast, impulsive, and zesty rhythms launches the episode depicting the character's playful and curious demeanour in exploiting Western freedom in the New Land. Just as the section freezes at the metaphoric projection of a crucifix with the ribbon sticks stretching far and horizontal to either sides of my still, standing body, the energetic and carefree doumbeck-deff notes vanish into sudden and immense silence, where, out of what feels like a gigantic resonating vacuum, the pounding and howling of the huge Arabic base drum take the stage, as if to scourge the character's self-inflicted sufferings of careless plays. It is between my Chinese dance ribbon, creative movement imagery, and an array of Middle Eastern drumming dramas in this section that my storyteller-interpreter stance and choreographic actions are further consolidated – in a Canadian third space of diverse cultural-artistic interpenetrations, re-imaginings, and re-creations.

Programmed in between the opening and the finale is the second section titled “Jade Chamber Breeze,” which I note as a choreographic revelation of the third space connoting my Chinese-Canadian presence. In my real-life role of a Chinese dance interpreter, I engage the Chinese traditional Han movement style of Jiaozhou *Yangge*<sup>77</sup> and its characteristic props – the

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<sup>77</sup> Literally translated as “rice-transplanting song,” an iconic peasant dance style of Han (Chinese mainstream) origin derived from rice transplanting steps and performed during harvests or celebrative events. There are over 70 *Yangge* styles in various

Chinese *Yangge* fan and handkerchief. The presentation with a contemporary twist of the traditional Chinese steps and props expresses the dynamic and dilemma of my third-space stance in translating while negotiating between Chinese traditional dance elements and modern Canadian experiences for interpretive eloquence and clarity. The scene involves a confluence of Chinese and Western movements, notably during my entry from upstage left, and my exit through upstage right – in a ballet-sourced Chinese classical travelling motion called “fragment steps.”<sup>78</sup> In my expression of an interpreter torn between traditional Chinese values and contemporary Canadian social practices, I employ extended limb gestures and accentuated upper bodily thrusts with hints of muscular reflexes typical of the Jiaozhou *Yanggee* style in enhancing the inner struggles and hesitancy of the interpreting self.

The vigorous and elaborate sweeping and flipping of my Chinese fan and handkerchief, as the dance proceeds, gradually turn calm and breezy toward the end of the section. The changed fan-handkerchief momentum accompanying my exit predominates as the section’s concluding metaphor. Choreographically, it suggests an artistic path of adaptive appropriation and a constructive *route* in my Chinese-Canadian re-enactment of the Palestinian story. Symbolically, both the entry and exit dance paths from opposite directions suggest the “ethnographic space” between Chinese and Canadian cultures, and between Eastern and Western experiences. It marks the concrete hyphen mediating and linking such cultures and experiences as the third space in my adoptive Canadian diaspora – the critical site of a transforming Chinese-ness.

The section is performed to the original score of *A Silent Prayer* by Hong Kong composer

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regions of China. Jiaozhou, a county of Qingdao City in the Shangdong Province in Eastern China, develops a regional *Yaggee* expression of robust, elastic upper chest movements coupled with agile and brisk limb motions. The dance is typified by accentuated twisting and directional flipping of fans and handkerchiefs (Loh 1988, 58).

<sup>78</sup> Tracing its influence by Russian classical ballet, the basic Chinese travel steps resemble *pas de bourrée* exercising small, rapid and simultaneous feet movements. When travelling, the Chinese “fragment steps” keep both feet on the balls and closely beside each other, whereas the *bourrée* keeps both feet in fifth position on demi or full pointe.



Doming Lam<sup>79</sup> for the Hong Kong Symphony Orchestra. A contemporary symphonic interplay of Chinese traditional and Western instruments including Chinese drums and gongs, Chinese flutes, European lutes, cellos, violins and piano, the pre-recorded music piece<sup>80</sup> references in form and style the distracted and resolution-seeking interpreting self – one torn between Eastern traditions and Western cultural expressions. Essentially a third-space musical offspring of the East and West, the score, integrating contemporary compositional techniques and rooted musical traditions, remains “natural” for my choreographic position and “in-between” identity. It reinforces my artistic choice as the project’s storyteller-interpreter working between Chinese and Western Others as it highlights my Chinese-Canadian identity of Hong Kong distinctness.

Accordingly, the costumes simply and spontaneously put together reiterate a Chinese-Canadian dance body performing in a third space between two cultures. Uncloaking the elaborate and shimmering traditional Chinese dance attires as shown in *Apart yet Together*, I choose to wear instead, a royal blue Canadian leotard, a pair of maroon-red traditional Chinese dance pants, a Middle Eastern beaded necklace twisted into a waist belt, and a white Middle Eastern rolled-up veil used as a sash around my lower abdomen. The featured cultures of Chinese and Palestinian-Arabic are symbolized respectively by the traditional Chinese colour of red, and the representative Middle Eastern colour of royal blue. The combination of Chinese and Middle Eastern ornaments and clothing connecting the two Toronto migrant cultures as a danced dialogue, in a physical-aesthetic sense, imparts a tangible third-space identification of Canadian cultural in-between-ness and blended-ness.

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<sup>79</sup> Co-founder of the Asian Composers’ League in Hong Kong, Macau-born composer Doming Lam is a highly respected and reputable musician who has invented a collection of Chinese New Music that merges contemporary avant-garde compositional techniques and traditional Chinese music sensibilities (International Society for Contemporary Music 2011-18, web).

<sup>80</sup> The 10-minute composition is the only recorded music used throughout the performance. Its harmonic mixture of Chinese traditional spirits and Western instrumental expressions aptly represents my choreographic stance of “Hong Kong-ness” built through East-West cultural dialogues and confluences.

Being Canadian implicates the acceptance of different cultures in keeping one's own. The project expresses my Chinese empathy and encouragement for the Other culture that is a Palestinian migrant experience in Canada. It is my choreographic medium that stages Canadian multiculturalism as a platform of mutual sharing, respect, and support. What makes the project Chinese-Canadian is the internal synthesis of my ancestral Chinese and diverse Canadian cultural experiences, and its choreographic transmission of a Canadian humanistic concept of ethno-transcultural or intercultural understanding. Similar to the previous choreographies, this project manifests the nature of "the global linking with the local." It transmits by and large a global diasporic issue micronized by the danced Palestinian story in the local mosaic urbanity of Toronto, reflecting a common (and likely unconscious) attitude or mentality of West-bound migrants from places of intense religious and social constrictions. The Western diaspora for these peoples could mean a haven for rebuilding what is missed or lost in the home country, and at the same time a complex web of changed values and materialistic temptations in which life becomes problematically unbalanced. The project is thus, in retrospect, a dance endeavour that is globally linked and locally produced in addressing the mixed blessings of migrant-acquired freedoms and troubles. It reasserts my third-space stance of a dance and visionary mediator with a creative initiative in alleviating Toronto migrant cultures encountering comparable Canadian or Western diasporic challenges.

"From what I have seen of your performances, you have come to a new ground of expression, I can see a lot of risk-taking." The post-performance audience comment curtails my project direction towards exploring new concepts and new ways of dancing "the aspired moment." A sole acculturative effort in lieu of collective and collaborative acculturations as illustrated through my previous dance productions, the project suggests an artistic offshoot from

my Chinese dance traditions, another turn of my Chinese-Canadian expression inspired by Toronto's multicultural society. In that event, I no longer crave the physical and creative conversation with a distinct and compatible artist or culture as in *Behind Silk Ribbons & Rebozos*, but am impelled to generate a cultural-artistic synthesis within my "one" interpretive-storytelling dance body. I consider the change a part of my spontaneous developments as a Chinese-Canadian dance artist, wherein I respond to the intrinsic call of delving further for an artistic "individuality" that articulates the contemporary dynamics of a lived and living locus of multicultural Toronto. Self-acculturation by way of *Ending an Arabic Fable* is an expression of that individuality, and the next step onward along my Chinese-Canadian *route* of dance making in that particular time span. It travels from the choreographic outset to building a unique and personal dance vocabulary of not mainly traditional Chinese, nor contemporary Canadian, but a spontaneous merging of both – in the potent third space between multiple cultures in my diasporic Canadian environment.

The key is "one succinct belief, one movement," as advised by my project advisor Danny Grossman.<sup>81</sup> The creative and stylistic skills of "all" in "oneness" predict a complicated yet motivational project base. "Assimilation of emotions and cultures might not necessarily be 'politically correct' but 'artistically viable,'" continues Grossman, "it can become something 'different,' a belief and an aspiration, especially for a solo dance artist" (pre-production discussion, 6/6/2007). How, in the creative process and during performances, may a sole dancing body present the dual selves of Other cultural impacts as a coherent whole in constructing a new or different form of Chinese dance expression in Canada? This has since

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<sup>81</sup> Founder and Artistic Director of the Danny Grossman Dance Company in Toronto (1975-2008), San Francisco-born modern dance master Danny Grossman is a highly respected Canadian dance icon renowned for his keen observations and astute opinions in support of dance artists of many cultures. While choreographing *Ending an Arabic Fable*, Grossman offered his unconditional artistic eye and advisory feedback through the work's critical developmental stages.

remained my artistic and research focus. An extended praxis from Kurath's note of "dance acculturation" as merging and remoulding the original cultural material with that of Others' in the New Land (cf. Footnote 2), self-acculturation (see p. 115; Footnote 75) manifests the creative logics and intuitiveness of my choreographic explorations in the diasporic Canadian homeland of social and cultural variances. It is primarily a solo dance phenomenon that resonates with Bhabha's notion of the third space and its agency of cultural intersections, interactions and (dance) integrations.

Spreading the long silk ribbon in the form of a big circle in the concluding segment of the finale, I imagine the circle as a clear lake in the midst of a desert, into which I submerge to sprinkle water of hope and freshness – the symbol of a new life. A post-performance feedback interprets the scene as the "endless" search for an identity based on the circle's metaphoric reflection of infinite continuation. Integrating the performed and perceived on that last ribbon imagery, I have come to a veritable depiction of my Chinese-Canadian, and any migrant identity striving or thriving in a diverse country like Canada, that they are always negotiated, and always in progress. Illustrated by my self-acculturative expression in *Ending an Arabic Fable*, there is no end in dancing Chinese-Canadian-ness, as there is no conclusion for the danced Palestinian story. It is all a case of changing and adapting cultural identities and individual *routes*. It is likewise my specific manifestation of Chinese-ness and artistic choice, of continuous self-visions and self-building – in the lived Canadian third space of cultural pluralism and in-between-ness.

## **PART II: Dancing Chinese-Canadian – a Vancouver-Global Route**

Part II of my study centres on Wen Wei Wang and his works in Vancouver. Wang, a former dancer with mainland China's Lanzhou Army Song and Dance Ensemble, immigrated to Canada in the 1990s in pursuit of a dance career. Having joined The Judith Marcuse Dance

Company and Ballet British Columbia during the first decade of his Canadian residency, Wang received the Clifford E. Lee Choreographic Award in 2000, and founded Wen Wei Dance in 2003. Under his artistic directorship, the Vancouver-based company has performed award-winning choreographies across and outside of Canada. I evaluate that Wang's dance productions of "third space" inspirations and glocalized characteristics are crucial in paving his staging and marketing success.

Cosmopolitan Vancouver, frequently referred to by Wang as a second home city of diverse creative resources and opportunities at media discussions, seems culturally and strategically efficacious for his dance creations. The city, with its multiple migrant (and immigrant) cultures integrating as a comprehensive cosmopolitan centre, demonstrates the glocalized process of global migrant flows construing a local lifestyle of intercultural experiences and socio-economic instigations. This process often ensues in migrant/immigrant citizens a third or culturally in-between space – literally or symbolically represented by a hyphen between one's native cultural roots and the Other culture(s) living and working in the same place. The hyphen does not necessarily connote a breaking up of one's original identity or subjugation to a dominant cultural group. Asian-North American sociological analysis from the past decade has shared that looking beyond the hyphen, one may locate social visions and "possibilities" (Ty and Goellnicht, 10) – meaning cultural associations, social chances/opportunities and the like. Pertaining to Wang's case, the hyphen suggests a work connection between his native Chinese and Other co-existing Canadian cultures in a Vancouver cosmopolitan setting – the *route* to more cultures and artistic possibilities, and to hybridization as a creative attitude and artistic strategy in the diaspora.

The multicultural Canadian vista encourages choreographic endeavours that transcend artistic boundaries and initiate cross-cultural ventures, inducing acculturated dance forms

corroborative of multiple reimagined and reconstructed identities. From a diasporic perspective, Vancouver's cosmopolitanism as a subtext of Canadian multiculturalism constitutes a third space between the migrated and the Western mainstream cultures, and an operative junction between global ethnic flows and local social constructions. For Wang as one of many Asian migrant dance artists, the third space exists as the socio-artistic nexus in articulating Chinese cultural experiences and their diverse implications through dancing a different set of socio-cultural values on the new, diasporic homeland of Canada.

A traditional Chinese dance professional, Wang emigrated from Beijing to Vancouver more than two decades ago, and has turned into a Canadian contemporary dancer-choreographer through his use of Western contemporary and ballet movements to express Chinese themes and social concepts. Wang's choreographies repeatedly engage his "third space" located between Chinese and Canadian social and political-economic cultures, resulting in a consistently transforming or reconstructing Chinese identity in the West.

The last 20 years I've been between somewhere, it's like being lost in translation. When I go back to my hometown in China I feel like it's changed – but because I've changed. And when I'm here I don't feel completely Canadian because I didn't grow up here, in that sense I'm "in the middle," and am trying to rebuild and find myself (Wang, *Vueweekly* interview, 2/2011).

The third space of "in-between-ness," as Bhabha indicates, processes "translation" and "negotiation" (cf. pp. 4-5) resulting in a changing diasporic identity. As an artist living "in between" Chinese and Canadian cultures, Wang employs this in-between space to translate identity issues and negotiate social meanings through combining Western movements with Chinese historic-cultural icons. His third-space inspired choreographic initiatives and artistic endeavours, as I observe, manifest as glocalized dance products of "the local constituting the global" (cf. p. 8) in the contemporary Canadian art scene.

How the “third space” consciousness enables Wang to explicate and translate a diasporic identity trapped between his Chinese and Canadian lives and experiences is exemplified through *In Transition* – the first of the two-part repertoire of *Under the Skin* premiered in 2012 in celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canadian and Chinese diplomatic relations. The piece reveals Wang as the “in-between” choreographer that attempts East-West connections through exploring the common ground of cultural and self-identity (ibid). Travelling with his Vancouver dancers to China to join the Beijing Modern Dance Company in creating the work, the journey triggers an identity crisis, during which Wang struggles with the “change” in himself as a returning artist to the Chinese homeland from his adoptive Canadian abode.

Applying his homebound experience to *In Transition/Under the Skin*, Wang translates the dilemma of his changing identity and emotions as a third-space artist torn between China and Canada. The sensed difference and inadaptability caused by the change of Wang’s migrated self are expressed through the dancers’ hectic, jammed movements, frustrated facial expressions, uptight bodies, clenched fists, and the colliding, pushing and pulling typical of Beijing streets and subway crowds. In his third space of neither completely Canadian nor Chinese, Wang sees himself caught “in the middle” of two distinct cultures – in that hyphenated space between Chinese and Canadian. The struggle in a third space between the two identities is visually concrete when a dancer has his arms pinned and pulled out board-straight on either side in his effort to move fluidly between two other dancers (Fig. 9). I perceive the image as a corporeal translation of Wang’s identity struggle, and his vulnerable responsiveness to being Chinese-Canadian under the shades of the “in-between.” Wang’s urge to “rebuild” and “find” himself in his “in-between” space, and the challenge of sustaining in a third space that involves all that personal change and re-adaptation between cultures and places are depicted in another scene

with a lone dancer's twisted and agonized body crawling through a group of frozen and indifferent bystanders. The physically and emotionally difficult movement is what I interpret as Wang's translation of a lonely struggle to retrieve his identity – with no other help but the inner self that keeps moving through and forward: a corporeal symbol of identity in progress.

Wang's in-between identity struggle as danced typifies a diasporic condition of modern cosmopolitanism. For the diasporic or migrated populations, cosmopolitanism depictive of cultural pluralism integrated as one unified social urban lifestyle generates conscious or subconscious insertions of the "hyphen(s)" between the rooted and Other cultures – the hyphenated identities. The Chinese-Canadian-ness of Wang and its experiential challenge are exemplary of a "diaspora adaptation" factor, which, according to intellectual historian Sheldon Pollock, existing cosmopolitan frameworks fail to include or address as a historical-ethnological question. Cosmopolitanism thus remains cosmopolitical (cf. Footnote 58) in propagating a "shared" space of cultural differences – the ethical imaginaries of a synchronous cultural-political mode of social operations and co-productions (Pollock et al 2000, 582).

Choreographing in a Canadian cosmopolitan environment of Western ideals, Wang uses the stressful dilemma of living the third and hyphenated space as a call for cultural integration and unity. The artistic choice re-emphasizes the global cosmopolitan aspiration of the culturally symmetric, and an all-inclusive cosmopolitan culture that bypasses the entrenched geo-cultural, historical and political unevenness between the self and Others choreographically presupposed in the agonized third-space bodies.

Wang's creative attitude in this work is interlaced with the cosmopolitics of local socio-cultural mobility and international economic ties. The Chinese-Canadian identity dilemma does not stand simply as a thematic plight, but a pragmatic header that involves a choreographic



appeasement of the hyphenated situation between the two featured cultures (nations). I see the piece as a glocalized project of Sino-Canadian artistic politics, first and foremost, through Wang's position as the commissioned artist or dance diplomat promoting Canadian and Chinese artistic and economic ties in the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary project. Moreover, Wang's engagement of local (Vancouver and Beijing) experiences in fulfilling the global trend of cultural allegiances and international trading vindicates the political economy of "the local constituting the global," where local Vancouver and Beijing cultural capitals join together for a globally endorsed project of artistic-economic merits.

In this light, Wang in his third space between Canadian and Chinese cultural politics, and between local resources and global reception, performs an artistic negotiation that serves the project climate – as evident in his project message: "Even though we don't speak the same language [.....] we have two different colours, the West and the East, but under the skin we are the same" (Wang, *Vueweekly* interview). The message of "We're all alike" (Vancouver Sun, dance preview, 12/2011), poetically conveyed by the Vancouver dancers standing and facing their Beijing counterparts through a gauzy screen in the finale, echoes Wang's cosmopolitanist idea of universal and collaborative harmony amid cultural and skin differences. It consummates Wang's artistic manifestation of the local-constituted global as a politicized negotiation of local cultural specifics and distinctness for universal or global economic concurrence – an approach that I identify as an artistic commission entwined with a political-economic mission. The embodied third-space issue, in reality, exists as Wang's strategic rather than thematic work base – a discourse that reinforces his adopted Western cosmopolitan notion of a culturally harmonic whole in countering the complex, intrinsically conflictive diasporic entity of in-between-ness.

Pursuant to Wang's project theory: "We are one – one country, one world" (Wang/The

Calgary Journal, dance preview, 3/2011), I discern cultural nationalism or strategic essentialism (Robertson, 41) as a project characteristic evolved from Wang's Chinese and Canadian in-between-ness and pertinent global-local negotiation. Wang's enunciation is suggestive of Robertson's note of modern urban cosmopolitics geared at condensing different co-existing cultures as a unified socio-economic structure of mutual and national benevolence. It also materializes a twist of Stuart Hall's scrutiny of "essentialism" – a traditional model that views cultural identity as "one, shared culture, a collective 'one true self' hiding inside the many other, more superficially or artificially imposed 'selves' [.....] as one people with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning" (2003, 234).

Given that Hall perceives "oneness" as "all" with a shared history and common ancestry, Wang re-imagines "all" of different cultural and geographical origins as "one" by flagging "sameness under the skin" with all peoples. I regard Wang's view as neither a conscious nor intended extension of the Hall theory, but his strategic reference of local cultural interconnectedness as a unitary, global culture that posits and integrates "Chinese" within the larger Canadian culture in a commissioned work celebrating intercultural/continental trade alliances. This choreographic conception of Wang can be seen as a strategic move to access mainstream Canadian art funding support, which leans toward proposals that promote intercultural collaborations, political-economic relations and conceptual oneness. The creative and touring commission funds awarded to the project by the British Columbia Arts Council (Media Room Spotlight 2013, web), in practice, speak volumes about Wang's strategic essentialist intent in connecting Vancouver and Beijing dance locales for this Canadian-based international artistic-political collaboration and dissemination.

The diasporic "in-between" as an embodied question of *In Transition/Under the Skin*

remains a choreographic apparatus in Wang's many other works. *Unbound* created in 2006 and *Cockpit* in 2009, for example, are both informed and aesthetically constructed by his third-space and cultural in-between-ness. Both manifest the glocal signification of "the local constituting the global," with the former using an extinct local cultural tradition of Chinese foot binding in relating global female inequality, and the latter a local Beijing biographical story of homosexual censorship in enhancing global receptivity of the issue. In substance, the works enlist local social cultures in striking global marketing attractions, where iconic Chinese cultural artifacts are thematically featured for Western and global appreciation. In his third space between Chinese and Canadian/Western cultures, Wang uses dance footwear made after the appearance of the 3-inch lotus shoes to translate his feelings about Chinese female foot binding in *Unbound*, and the 6-foot pheasant feathers fastened on the dancers' body parts to suggest male power and sexual energy in *Cockpit*. The cultural icons as translation tools deliver local-historic Chinese episodes to present-day audiences, concurrently unearthing the choreographer's other "selves" or re-imagined identities at dance creations and performances.

In *Unbound* (2006) (Fig. 10), Wang's role as a third-space translator of Chinese historic-cultural experiences for the West can be traced through his abstract artistic statement: "The work conveys our fleeting existence only in memories and in emotional experiences shared" (Wang/la danse sur les routes 12/2011, web). In using replicas of the 3-inch lotus shoes worn by dancers to translate and share his feelings and "imagined" experiences of the extinct Chinese female foot binding practice,<sup>82</sup> Wang intends to evoke emotional connections of contemporary viewers with the oppressed past. Working between past Eastern and contemporary Western social values,

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<sup>82</sup> Chinese female foot binding originated as early as the late Tang Dynasty (923-936 A. D.), and continued through the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). The bound feet were given the embellished name of "3-inch golden lotus" symbolizing smallness, opulence, and beauty. In remote villages or mountain areas, women still had their feet bound even when New China was founded in 1949 (Wang 2002, 35-36).

Wang attempts to re-load a Chinese experience of physical distortion and emotional damage in the name of familial status and feminine grace through a visual translation of dance movements in the iconic shoes. The translation cannot be more literal, when, in an early scene, the female dancers in their 3-inch lotus shoes are seen struggling with an invisible force that pulls them from a brightly lit downstage (stage front) area to a dimmed upstage (stage back) corner, tossing their limbs and bodies in quiet protestation before collapsing onto the stage floor. The force, I gather, is about social and patriarchal oppressions in the eyes of Wang as a module of “cosmopolitan citizens” (Reilly 2007, 191) – one adhering to a shared ideology of human respect and social interdependency in a community integrating peoples from different places and nations.

In his “third space” between Chinese and Canadian/Western social norms, Wang transposes a sense of cosmo-feminism<sup>83</sup> in his translation of the obsolete and localized Chinese foot binding tradition for modern Western and global viewers. The overall dance vocabulary is framed by the pre-existing Eurocentric cosmopolitan visions of human equality and synchronous social (gender) voices. I consider the dance a cosmo-feminist “play” as it involves a dramatic re-enactment of the choreographer’s imagined experiences and emotive empathy concerning Chinese females affected by socially constructed gender traditions. Choreographing from an international relations concept similar to that of a “global civil society” (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 32), Wang creates a space where he and his dancers engage as transnational actors in the moral cosmopolitanist assertion of treating humanity of all cultures and genders with equal concern and contemporary advocacy. A glimpse of this attitude is caught through a recurring motif

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<sup>83</sup> Cosmopolitan feminism builds on recent feminist analyses of the global women’s human rights movement while responding to the gender blindness of mainstream cosmopolitan politics. It is also linked to an emerging international relations literature on “global civil society,” which addresses the role and activities of women’s nongovernmental organizations and networks as constituting new forms of “cosmopolitan citizenship,” or a part of “cosmopolitan democracy” on a transnational global forum (Reilly 2007, 191; see also Keck and Sikkink 1998, 32-34).

throughout the piece, where bare footed male dancers are seen lifting, spinning and supporting the female dancers in their restrictive footwear in continuous sets of duets. Situated in the third space between his own and Western Other cultures, Wang translates his empathy and advocacy for those suffering foot binding confinement and repression through vigorous male lifts and supports onstage. The motif accentuates Wang's artistic play of a cosmo-feminist advocate for human rights and freedom, and essentially his choreographic response framed by a cosmopolitanist imagination of global relevancy: "Women are still not treated as equal, there (China) and everywhere around the world" (Wang/Now Magazine, dance preview, 4/2007).

Wang's translation in his third space between traditional Chinese and Western or global social standards imparts an identity transformation that is cosmopolitically prompted. His West-based cosmopolitanist presence in and behind the dance scenes suggests a changing and westernized identity that is more Canadian than Chinese. Wang's choreographic role as a social ("male") advocate who processes local female mistreatments for global contemplations through the historic metaphor of Chinese bound feet proves an incisive departure from traditional Chinese male patriarchal practices. In an artistic effort to uncover uneven gender experiences of old China, he becomes the in-between (East and West) figure inclined to merge with the Western contemporary cosmopolitan visions of a synchronous and politically symmetrical world. Closest in context to a neoliberal<sup>84</sup> approach, Wang performs the role of a social mediator for what he sees as the weak and damaged in the foot binding experience – a role that is a likely magnet in drawing Western cosmopolitan consensus and viewing resonances.

Wang's choice as observed in this social identity transformation creates an artistic *route*

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<sup>84</sup> Sheldon Pollock describes the development of neoliberal consensus apparent in the post-Cold War period as the interstices of the old and the new, and a transitional platform on which to confront the past as the present. He also states that nowadays neoliberal emphasis falls more on individualist aspirations and universalist norms for human equality in a world of vying political systems and ideological structures (Pollock et al 2000, 581). I note that Wang's contextual approach in *Unbound* echoes this neoliberal trend of expression in all respects.

nexus for Western and national recognition. In choreographing along global cosmopolitan modes and aspirations, Wang's Western-centric cosmopolitical move speaks to Canadian and Western ears, and not necessarily of a "deepened" Chinese connection or understanding transcending geo-historical and cultural boundaries. A revealing component beyond choreographic consciousness is spotted in the scene where the female dancers in their lotus shoes struggle with disorderly skyward kicks upon falling onto the ground, during which two curious looking male dancers wearing the exact same lotus shoes exercise random floor tapping downstage. An intuitive spark occurs to my viewing sensory as one of the male dancers gradually withdraws to sit in isolation, and, taking a lotus shoe off and raising it to a stage gleam from above, begins scrutinizing the footwear like a lost historian. The moment recalls Pollock's implication of modern cosmopolitanism as a universal, singular understanding of social existence without the substantiating knowledge or crucial discoveries of socio-historical and ethno-cultural particulars (Pollock et al, 581-582). I realize the curious and lost male soul examining his lotus shoe as Wang's neoliberal cosmopolitan double – the Western mindset that approaches specific human experiences as "an abstract unit of cultural exchange" (ibid, 581) devoid of concrete and deep-seated historical-cultural narratives. I surmise that Wang has, by instinct or coincidence, let slip in the choreographed segment this common contemporary cosmopolitan issue of the historically lost and asymmetrical – a geo-historical and cultural tribulation of the diaspora-anchored.

In *Cockpit* (2009) (Fig. 11), Wang continues with cosmopolitanist translation in his third space between the East and West. The work illustrates by means of long, elusive pheasant feathers Wang's decades-old autobiography of an all-male boarding dance school in China, confronting the question of sexual identity censored in a traditional Chinese social norm. "There

was no sex education in China. My homosexuality was never allowed expression. My parents still don't know" (Citron, Globe & Mail interview, 4/2010). Wang's choreographic impetus derived from this personal account can be interpreted as an artistic attempt of cosmo-feminist emancipatory politics "that expose previously hidden abuses of power and give expression to previously excluded and marginalized voices" (Reilly, 194). Flipping from the *Unbound* context of female inequality to male, Wang adopts the avian metaphor of an all-male piloting unit in *Cockpit* to navigate and tackle homosexuality as a cultural question. Wang's translation of his experience with Chinese cultural props and Western contemporary movements in the Canadian diasporic clime, I observe, is an artistic "doorway" that liberates his homosexual identity initially suppressed in native China while re-acknowledging the existence of an inner self – the other "hidden" identity.

*Cockpit* weaves together a story from behind cultural bars on same-sex fantasies and social perceptions under the choreographic lens of Wang as an affected individual. The male dancers exploring a translucent egg on their eye sockets and lusciously swaying limbs ... a structured cluster of adoring male bodies encircling the sensuous sex goddess burrowing from within ... and eventually, a flamboyant male with a long pheasant feather attached to his crotch hypnotized by another male with the same long feather attached to the exact same body part ... one after another, the scenes unravel what seems like a chain of biological encounters carving the choreographer's "unspoken" homosexual identification under Western stage light. The vital message from these episodic scenes, nevertheless, is written in the aesthetic utilization of the 6-foot long pheasant feathers affixed to various corporeal areas of the dancers.

In traditional Beijing opera, these feathers fastened onto the helmets of head warriors symbolize regal power and male valour. Contemporary interpretation common in the East and

West often associates gaudy feathers of bird species such as pheasants or peacocks with male sexual energy and appeal. On account of the choreography's emancipatory political nuance, there is an aesthetic suggestion of Wang's male dancers with the attached feathers as "empowered" warriors fighting for a space to emancipate their suppressed sexual natures. While dancing and physically adjusting to the flip-flowing motions of the overlong feathers adhered to the body parts of either the head, the crotch, the shoulders, the wrists or the knees, the dancers need to exert an intense mental energy of focus and directions. Onstage, this mental energy in mastering the soft and wayward feathers is sensed and transmitted as an intrinsic power oozing from within the mindful dancing bodies, generating a masculine, directed, and grounded expressivity in the movements. The feathers incorporated as part of the dance images and movements, in this nugget, emit the symbolic connotation of a "mental male power" that strives to express or accost the cultural issue of homosexual secrecy as formerly experienced by the choreographer in his Chinese homeland. Elusive and alluring in appearance, these cultural feathery vestiges perform as Wang's translation tools that leave spectators with the imaginative or intellectual liberties to decipher and eschew.

Wang's translation of a Chinese social concern and cultural stigma in a Western dance discourse entails the cosmopolitan and universal humanistic entitlement "to engage with others from different cultures and contexts" in a capacity to "present oneself and be heard within and across political communities" (Held 2002, 310). I relate the danced context once again with "play" or "drama" that can vivify the self-entitlement and make it heard by Other cultures sharing the same cosmopolitan vicinity. It echoes dance historians and theorists Anthony Shay's and Barbara Sellers-Young's reference of "a healing, unconscious and personalized therapy" (2003, 18) in their analogy of dance dramatization and character re-enactments in staged (belly-



dance) performances. *Cockpit*, dramatizing a personal concern of cultural and social constraints for onstage release, thereupon enables an artistic channel of therapeutic expressiveness – for Wang, and others encountering similar identification experiences. The drama of expressing this concern with cultural props like the operatic pheasant feathers, from both aesthetic and symbolic angles, foments a visual reimagination of the Shay-Sellers-Young denotation of “self-representation” (ibid) – the capacity of re-building self-values and individual assurance through dramatic art forms. I recognize this expressive state as a common therapeutic impetus on the global cosmopolitan dance stage. To many contemporary dance artists, the dance stage works as a universal platform where cross-cultural exchanges and open discourses on local gender and cultural issues arising from varying cultural values and social practices take place. And Wang is one of those many conscious or unconscious therapeutic seekers, or deliverers – as choreographers or performers.

I review *Unbound* and *Cockpit* as cosmopolitanist projects that process local cultural ingredients for global palates, which, for economic viability, permit diasporic constitution and perpetration of cultural-artistic maxims across Western and international dance viewership. Using the local to target or constitute the global presents a logical linkage with current cosmopolitan production trends of catering for increasingly differentiated (diverse) consumers, and especially “to the desire for the familiar and/or nostalgic wishes” from an “ethnic” perspective (Robertson, 29). The scenario assumes a form of cultural capital (ibid) as exemplified in Wang’s distinctive local Chinese icons of the lotus shoes and operatic pheasant feathers. In such cases, the extinct or faded cultural-aesthetic features, when employed to spark Western and global interests, also ignite international Chinese diasporic attractions stemming from cultural-traditional affiliations. I see in Wang’s approach a version of “re-exoticism” (cf.

Footnote 57), during which the Chinese icons are primal means to reactivate Western fantasies of Eastern exotic experiences and identities (Shay and Sellers-Young, 14). In this circumstance, the practice of “exoticism” as a critique of Western colonial imaginaries and representations of the Eastern colonized (Said 1998) is reconstituted and recycled for reception enhancement.

Living in between Eastern (Chinese) and Western (Canadian) cultures, Wang is aware of what Chinese aspects or elements strike immediate appeal to Canadian and Other cultures in the West. The lotus shoes and operatic pheasant feathers re-exoticized are hence Wang’s choreographic strategies – his tools of strategic negotiation between local Chinese and global or Western cultures in the dance making process. In retaining a local-cultural touch through the visually captivating Chinese icons, Wang omits probing relevant historic-cultural attributes of the danced subjects, resulting in a market driven negotiation of authentic reflections and experiences for the universally appealing and acknowledgeable. The negotiated products then become less of a cultural knowledge, and more of Pollock’s admonition of a “quasi object” (Pollock, 587) – located in between a range of other cultural quasi objects in a cosmopolitan setting.<sup>85</sup> In bearing some and not all of the Chinese historical and cultural features, Wang’s works as discussed maintain and stress the East-West ideological and aesthetical mixtures for Canadian and general cosmopolitan reception. Developed in the modern realm of cultural and political actions, these works constitute less socio-historical solidarities than visually and physically dazzling self-exoticized elements. The physically impossible 3-inch lotus shoes claiming a local Chinese historic-cultural representation, and the 6-foot operatic pheasant feathers containing an ancient Chinese warrior legend, despite longstanding global

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<sup>85</sup> Pollock’s application of French contemporary sociologist Bruno Latour’s observation of “cultural quasi objects” as a cosmopolitan problematic in historical and socio-cultural lights. The mixing and matching of social, economic, cultural, scientific, and technological sources and relations without a complete sense of history, upbringing, or parentage, according to Latour, present the objects as dazzling and dangerous hybrids with a life and persona of their own. (See Latour 1993, 2, 51.)

decolonization, still invoke a sense of exotic mysteriousness in a contemporary Western worldview of the obscure, fascinating East. The Isadora Award for Choreography for *Unbound*, and the Rio Tinto Alcan Award for *Cockpit* (Wen Wei Dance 2013, web), at long last, testify the sound and controversial afterlife of Orientalist exoticism that Wang effectively re-engages in sustaining Western and global receptivity.

“I bring something different to dance. It’s a multicultural fusion of East and West that mixes all kinds of technique together” (Citron, Globe & Mail interview). Wang’s description of his dance developments in Vancouver is archetypal of diasporic dance artists working on a globalized cosmopolitan dance stage. It is obvious that Wang’s choreographic direction is inspired and facilitated by the Vancouver cosmopolitan and multicultural communities. The city’s diverse cultural and dance traditions provide vital resources for his work base. The integration of Chinese social themes or concepts with ballet and contemporary movements, and the blending of Chinese cultural iconography with Western theatricalities and global cosmopolitan values, for instance, are all artistic evidences of his Chinese-Canadian in-between-ness living the diasporic-cosmopolitan norm of Vancouver. The norm has dual effects on Wang as a migrant dance artist. On one side of the coin, its multicultural and cosmopolitan vibes stimulate Wang’s cultural and artistic cross-pollinations as a potent Canadian art funding source; on the other side, it instigates his indeterminate or fluid identity of Chinese-Canadian. The hybrid context of Wang’s dance productions is indeed an artistic derivation from this identity. It neither articulates his Chinese-ness nor Canadian-ness, but somewhere “in the middle” (cf. p. 127), as he himself concedes. In concept and practice, Wang’s works as examined bring to light his individual artistic choice and choreographic strategies made in this Canadian third/in-

between space – the artistic actions that response to local social and global political calls in fulfilling viewing and dissemination expectations.

### **Between Chinese and Canadian: the Divergent Dance Routes**

Of the same Chinese ancestry and practicing in the same adoptive Canadian diaspora, Wang and I engage markedly individual and divergent routes in our choreographic developments. I observe the scenario as closely tied with our different native environments of socio-political distinctness. Born and raised in British colonial Hong Kong, I have been exposed and accustomed to British, Euro-American, and Western social values. Due to my native immersion in a Chinese-populated Hong Kong society of Western capitalist construction, I have become both sensitive to and appreciative of Chinese ancestral philosophies and cultural traditions – particularly after moving to Canada. The urge and inclination to trace and rediscover my Chinese roots in creating an artistic *route* representative of my Chinese traits and Canadian experiences are, in this situation, constant and solid. Wang, a native (mainland) Chinese from Beijing, lived an essentialist Chinese cultural and socialist lifestyle before his Canadian emigration – with close to no opportunities to glimpse the West. For Wang, the diasporic home base of Canada provides an enriching eye-opener, and a cherished social haven in pursuing – in his words – the “artistic freedom and individuality” (Citron, Globe & Mail interview) in forging his own dance expression. Wang’s choreographic approach in his Canadian New Land relays an identity search and a creative vision in embracing the West and Western artistic contexts – the much deprived foreign notions and materials in his original Chinese dwelling. Taking into account my and Wang’s differing native and social backgrounds of Hong Kong and China, I can rationalize, after living in British Hong Kong since birth, my choice of returning to Chinese ancestral dance traits and traditional features on diasporic Canadian ground. At the same time, I

can comprehend Wang's choice of moving away from his long-attached mainland Chinese roots – in initiating a Western contemporary dance direction of diasporic Canadian creative stimulants to express unresolved native Chinese social questions.

In using my traditional-based Chinese dance movements to co-present and/or converge with Other cultures and artistries in Toronto, my dance choice-*route* indicates a continuous exploration of my Chinese-Canadian existence and relative dance inspirations. It demonstrates a conscious “contemporary voice” that reinterprets Chinese historic-traditional values, and the artistic effort that speaks of the living moments and “not just of the conventions of the past” (Strate 1996, 70). As a traditional Chinese dance artist practicing in Canada, I do not feel complete or relevant in working with sole traditional Chinese dance expression from the past. Acculturation and self-acculturation thus become my new “Chinese” way of addressing the diasporic reality of multicultural Toronto and its progressively changing socio-cultural dimensions. Choreographing Western contemporary-balletic steps with traditional Chinese icons and Canadian/Western social concepts, Wang's choice-*route* implicates a similar impetus of a “contemporary voice” sought, and simultaneously of a New China-driven choreographic approach with a (post-modern) mind and body “hungry for new (Western) dance forms and (Western) ideas” (ibid, Epilogue). His Westward gaze as detached exemplifies a social tendency affecting various mainland Chinese aspects (commonly of trades and the arts) since the 1980s – an epoch marking China's reopening to the West after an extensive period of ideological-political complications causing economic setbacks and social restrictions.<sup>86</sup> In this orbit, Wang's approach can be elaborated as an epoch-induced dance expressivity reaching out for a Canadian

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<sup>86</sup> Detrimental ideological-political consequences as such were climaxed by the Chinese military suppression of prolonged university student and civilian protestations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, known historically as the June 4 Incident or Massacre of 1989. Compelled by worldwide pro-democratic criticisms and an obsolete, disastrous national socio-economy, then Chinese Chairman and paramount leader Deng Xiaoping resolved in opening China to foreign investments and global trades – a foremost reform setting China's gradual rise to one of the largest global economic systems of nowadays. (Excerpted data from *The Rise of China*, a documentary released during the 2000s on Toronto-based mainstream and Chinese television channels.)

or Western breakthrough beyond the native mainland Chinese boundaries.

In the lived diaspora, placial along with temporal constitutions of changing regional cultures and social impacts across the same Canadian landscape formulate the differing Chinese-Canadian “habitus” (Bourdieu 1993, 86) in Wang’s and my choreographies. In both cases, the dance body becomes the symbolic carrier of placial-cultural values developed concurrently with epochal social forces, presenting an “acquired habitual or standard condition” (Thomas 2002, 128) linked to native, diasporic, and personal histories. On this point, my Toronto-based works first developed during the heyday of Canadian multiculturalism in the early 1990s (cf. Footnote 54; pp. 93-94) assume a spontaneous ideological showcase of local multicultural living. The habitus of a collaborative and mutually respectful mosaic Toronto is gleaned through the bodily projection of my Chinese dance heritage conjoined with distinct Torontonians cultures and artistry in acculturated forms. Wang’s Vancouver-based works emerged as Canadian “multiculturalism” started to adopt the politically redefined notion of Canadian “diversity” in the 2000s, demonstrating the shifting multicultural measure of “cultures and beyond” – the “inclusivity” of different sexual and gender identities, racially diverse political-governmental and occupational representations and so forth. In my intuitive assessment, the measure instigates Wang’s dance creations in engaging native Chinese social and traditional encounters as a global metaphor of ethno-cultural and humanistic aspirations. With a habitus of Vancouver’s diverse and relatively integrative cosmopolitan nature, Wang and his works have moved beyond and above distinct cultures to address humanity, or human conditions, as a universal and cosmopolitical concern.

The choreographed and the embodied in our works reflect the varied cultural-artistic choices and creative actions directly associated with the originating places and social orders,

illuminating our divergent Toronto and Vancouver dance *routes*. Examined side by side through social and artistic lenses, our two choreographic streams indicate how the dancing body “conditioned” by socio-cultural and traditional systems of specific places can adjust to continuously changing placial values and circumstances. It foregrounds our distinct versions of Chinese-Canadian-ness shaped by the different Others and artistic sources that configure the Toronto and Vancouver socio-cultural realms. Connecting the “placial-temporal” dance phenomena with Diana Taylor’s notion of “the repertoire” that moves through different times, locations and performers-viewers in transmitting different strains and interpretations of social histories, cultural meanings, and identities (2003, 21), I spot the works of Wang’s and mine as a speck of the many enduring examples of the “ephemeral and embodied” – created and performed to the lived and changing socio-political climates and cultural particularities of our immediate Canadian diasporic milieus.

The diversified cultural-creative ingredients used along our Toronto and Vancouver dance *routes*, in turn, denote Mikhail Bakhtin’s linguistic notion of “heteroglossia” (1981, 263; Katrak 2011, 14) – the multiple and intersecting verbal and textual meanings acquired from various locales in construing a new or distinct regional vocabulary. Living a third space between Torontonion migrant cultures, my works articulate intercultural bonding with Chinese traditional movements and dance props, poetic texts, East Asian, Mexican, and Middle Eastern dance-and-music theatres. Living his third space within a Vancouver cosmopolitanism of East-West cultural melding, Wang’s works transfuse a cross-cultural Canadian essence with Euro-American based contemporary and balletic steps, cosmopolitanist philosophies, Chinese cultural icons, and native Chinese social experiences. The inter-textual dance apparatuses employed demonstrate discrete heterogeneous creative choices of placial attributions and influences, reaffirming our

culturally and artistically hybrid Chinese-Canadian identities of specific Toronto and Vancouver social nuances.

Perceiving my works as a Chinese artistic component operating in the larger Canadian social and artistic contexts, I acknowledge the “historical and logical” in my fluid and transforming identity as danced in the West. The ethno-diasporic term of Chinese-Canadian is more of an added cultural (migrant) stance to explore and create from my Chinese ancestry and dance traditions. The hyphen between Chinese and Canadian does not quite remind me of a cultural fragmentation or national divisiveness, but a social connection between the different cultures constituting my multicultural Canadian environment. It is, in my dance practitioner-researcher view of then and now, an etymological East-West bridging of current diasporic events and past native histories that reference the adopted societies and adapted art scenes, plus any new artistic attitudes or practices arising from it.

On this note, dancing or choreographing Chinese-Canadian for Wang and me echoes English, Film and Cultural Studies professors Eleanor Ty’s and Donald Goellnicht’s view that the Asian North American hyphenated identities create “alternate spaces from which to speak or to imagine” in the lived diasporas (2004, 10). The hyphen existing between my own (Hong Kong) Chinese and Canadian (diverse) cultures provide a vibrant linkage to Other cultural identities and a new space for socially inventive and artistically collaborative possibilities. The choreographed group and self-acculturations of distinct Torontonians ethnicities, as corporeally and aurally translated or interpreted in my dance productions, reflect the visceral reimagination and realization of such hyphen-linked possibilities – of new perspectives, “new representations” (ibid) on socio-cultural and artistic grounds. Proclaiming his choreographic stance as always “in the middle,” Wang sees his works as germinated from between the culturally mixed and



creatively fluid in cosmopolitan Vancouver – not specifically Chinese, nor Canadian, but somewhere between the two. Honed as well within the Ty-Goellnicht indication of a socially constructed hyphenated space of “envisioning possibilities” between cultures (ibid), Wang’s works exhibit a different take of showcasing Chinese-Canadian-ness. Adhering to Canadian developed contemporary-balletic dance texts in expressing his Chinese stories and emotions, Wang demonstrates a “new social psyche” (ibid) that disintegrates and fuses Chinese and Canadian cultural borders as he delivers the cosmopolitanist tenets of Western inauguration. An illustrative relevancy to Paul Gilroy’s delineation of diasporic identities as “coming to terms” with the (Western) “routes” (1993, 19), Wang’s case typifies a diasporic process of movement and mediation that implicates negotiated Chinese-ness and Westernization as a chosen path of his identity quest.

### **Choreographing Chinese-Canadian and Glocal In-Between-ness**

In further examining Wang’s and my Chinese-Canadian identities processed on individual dance *routes*, I observe that our choreographic works are both responsive to the cultural and political conditions of our native and diasporic sites. My Chinese traditional-based dance works are spontaneously responsive to the detached yet innately revered Chinese dance heritage – in the historically diasporic geography of native Hong Kong, and more so in the far-off Western diaspora of Canada. Consistently engaging this valued heritage in articulating my ancestral Chinese-ness and its social-artistic connections with local Torontonians cultures, as I retrace, substantiates a co-existence of my Chinese and Canadian selves in dance. Wang, as an initially traditional Chinese dance expert migrated to Canada from mainland China, conversely, produces works that are symptomatically responsive to Western cultural-artistic values and global socio-economic demands. My response indicates a re-identification of the Chinese ancestral self in

forming an artistic *route* of Canadian multicultural embracement, when in fact Wang's connotes a partial "disidentification" (Munoz 1999) of his Chinese native self through pronouncing a Chinese-Canadian junction, in which Canadian interpretive and Western cosmopolitan framings of inherent Chinese values are strategically applied on an artistic *route* for Canadian and global reception.

Both our choreographic *routes*, after all, signify the lived third space or cultural in-betweenness – where the co-casting of Others as "producers of the articulated texts" (Ness 1997, 69) in dance witness hybrid identities in construction. British Hong Kong, ancestral or native China, Hong Kongese or mainland Chinese, and Chinese-Canadian, they represent a historically and socio-politically complex intermixture of beings and meanings produced between our original and diasporic homelands as time progresses. An international aesthetic constitution of Chinese-ness enabled in a Canadian intersection of diverse dance traditions and artistic techniques, they affirm the living condition in and of difference, the diasporic selves consciously and unconsciously "overlaid and occupied by other possible identities" (Rafael 1995, 106). For me, the condition inspires a choreographic series of collaborated and self-evolved acculturations through inherited Chinese and Other performing artistries in personifying Canadian social *acceptance* and *adaptation*. For Wang, it establishes his Western contemporary and balletic fusions in voicing an understated *resistance* to former Chinese social experiences via global cosmopolitan lens, and his Westernization as a cultural and psychical means of personal coping with the Chinese past.

For Wang and me, our dance journeys of complex socio-historicity involve more than just cultures and the in-between. Pollock's conception of global-local constituted "cosmopolitanisms" (2002), or Robertson's diagnosis of glocalization(s) (1995), and the by-

products of acculturation and/or transculturation, to greater or lesser extents, are all interrelated causes and effects of the third space. While my dance narratives exude localized global migrants as Canadian Others co-producing and re-interpreting a specific (Hong Kong) Chinese-Torontonian identity of historical and socio-cultural dynamics, Wang's evince an indefinite, Westernized Vancouver Chinese-ness processed amid the vexing currents of global cosmopolitan civics and local East-West cultural-political negotiations. The artistic merging of the global and the local in our cases suggests a larger, latently impactful third space between interactive global drives and local responses constantly at play within and beyond cultural spectrums. The glocal phenomena help perpetuate new or alternative forms of our reinvented and hybridized identities at dance creations in the germane diaspora cities. A fluid agency and an open arena<sup>87</sup> for socio-political and intercultural dialogues, the third space implicating cultural and glocal in between-ness is central to building our Chinese-Canadian ethno-artistic sources and choreographic muses.

Looking through a Chinese-Canadian lens, my sense of the third space – between global and local constituents, or between geo-historically evolved cultures in diasporas, is complex and two-folded. In viewing the space as an enabling locus to more artistic and identity possibilities, I also perceive its in-between-ness as a probable inductor in (re) appropriating or negotiating the culturally specific or authentic for the internationally appealing yet cultural-artistically compromised. On that basis, the works that I produce strive to maintain my specialization of Chinese traditional movements as the core choreographic text – even amid co-creating or dialoguing with the multiple cultures engaged. The artistic manifestations of my dispositions and social emplacements are definitively (Hong Kong) Chinese-Canadian with “Canadian” signifying Other cultures. Erecting a personal feeling of my Chinese intermixing with diverse

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<sup>87</sup> In a personal meeting with Wen Wei Wang, both Wang and I agree that the third space provides an “open” and “fluid” agency for choreographic and social mobility. Wang's capacity of “moving forward” with his artistic life and dance creations, as he notes, begins and continues with his third-space/culturally in-between stance. (Vancouver Central Library, 9/21/2017.)

cultural origins as part of a Canadian dance heritage, I manage to locate a changing self in harmony with the different cultures that help fabricate Canada. I see in my works the “space and time” (cf. p. 105) equivalent to a “third” creative dimension that facilitates my alternate approach and vocabulary in reconstructing a diasporic cultural-artistic self on Canadian soil. The hyphen between Chinese and Canadian has not posted a concrete issue, and has remained a subtly prevalent “feeling” (cf. p. 39) of an additional identity, a link to Other chances and Other choices – in its capacity of bridging between ancestral and diasporic social histories and cultures. As indicated by its designated position, it is neither the beginning nor the end of my cultural-and-dance direction, but a critical and continuous “in-between” space that leads to more – cultures, selves, and all relevant reimaginations and reinventions.

On the same basis, Wang’s feeling of a “vulnerable” as opposed to my “contented” in-between-ness is noteworthy. His being in the midst of a Chinese native and Canadian diasporic self suggests a cultural-artistic stance that is both constructive and risky. I am moved and impressed by Wang’s artistic efforts and accomplishments in the Canadian and international dance scenes, though skeptical of his choreographic approach that seems to tailor Chinese-ness for Canadian and global expectations. A vibrant exemplar of a Chinese diasporic identity consistently “routed” and “coming to terms” (Gilroy, 19) with Western social and cosmopolitical systems, Wang’s choreographic recount of migrated Chinese-ness is skillfully constructed within the socio-ideological frame of adoptive Canadian-ness. It lays the foundation of global transculturation and reception – with a language that is generally familiar to and appreciated by Western as well as international viewers. I further observe that the same hyphen symbolic of cultural linkage in my case signifies in Wang’s his intrinsic connection with a newly acquired Canadian cosmopolitan-ness, upon which the risk of losing the culturally grounded and

traditionally revitalizing in the original Chinese self with a Western oriented dance metaphysics is not impossible. I respect, however, that such may be Wang's intuitive response to his Western diasporic milieu of outright socio-cultural and political differences, where he undergoes all the more artistic negotiation and personal struggles to arrive at the existing milestone of professional recognition. Wang's brooding over being "in the middle," "lost in translation," and trying to "find" and "re-rebuild" himself (cf. p. 127), perhaps, is the crystal mirror of his adopted Western attitude and artistic inclination in this particular situation – unerringly the "third-space dilemma" arisen between his native Chinese *roots* and diasporic Canadian *routes*.

Chinese-Canadian – meaning Chinese as a distinct mosaic composite of Canada, or Canada's adoption of Chinese as one of its many national cultures, is duly translated, interpreted and negotiated in Wang's and my third-space choreographies. Influenced and inspired by Canadian multiculturalism and diversity in different cities and timeframes, the works, as afore elaborated, transcend the topic of cultures or cultural differences to indicate decisive global-local plays. A Chinese-Canadian identity manifest in dance, as exemplified through our choreographic *routes*, is an ongoing glocalized fabrication between being Chinese and Canadian – socio-politically and artistically, and an individual feeling and action on "how" best to express that "mixed" self of the moment. At a recent coffee rendezvous with Wang, Wang remarked with a slightly unsure smile: "I'm still in the middle!" I wish I had, instead of taking his remark with a comforting sip of my hot mocha, responded by affirming "Likewise, just that the feeling is more or less immersed in and camouflaged by my Chinese distinctness working with equally distinct migrant cultures."

The post-rendezvous reflection, in a way, draws the topical presupposition that Wang's graphic and sustained feeling of being in the middle may have generated from the persistency in

threading his distinct Chinese origin and social past with the Western cosmopolitan lifestyle of Canadian contemporaneity. The “cutting edge” (Bhabha, 56) between Chinese and Canadian, as between the East and West, can be an unsettling condition of clear-cut cultural and socio-political differences. I can see from Wang’s position that it is not easy, and at times frustrating, to live and choreograph the mainstream Canadian (Western) style, although he has been exceptionally talented and successful with this approach. Working with Other Canadian migrant cultures of distinct origins and not necessarily from the West, I feel spontaneously adaptive due to the common or crossed historic-cultural paths that keep inspiring artistic understanding and collaborations. The sense of being “in the middle” is therefore theoretically present yet experientially transparent in my works. Located between Chinese and Canadian, Wang’s concretely felt “in the middle-ness” or “in-between-ness,” when transpired in my dance body and choreographic verses, becomes performatively and choreographically dissolvable – an often unremarkable intrinsic consciousness.

Chinese-Canadian as one united Canadian identity, or a separated and closely knitted social entity, does not pose too difficult a personal choice or creative path for me. It has not expedited my feeling any less Chinese or Canadian, knowing I am both. It has, in effect, mustered a changing Chinese-ness in me, just as it does in Wang. Our dance expressions of Chinese-Canadian, however divergent against different geopolitical-cultural and temporal backdrops, still contain that “feeling” or notion of being Chinese at the core of our Canadian-produced dance art. An event of “the changing same” (Gilroy, xi), the Canadian remoulding of our Chinese sameness fosters variable dance visuals and syntax depictive of unique Sino-stemmed selves. These identities that I specify as “Chinese diasporic” are always caught in a state of “becoming” and in the process of negotiation – in that third space of cultural and glocal in-between-ness mobilized

by placial and temporal complexions. At this point, choreographing Chinese-Canadian for Wang and me is not so much about scrutinizing and acknowledging who we are outside the (mainland Chinese and Hong Kong) native lands, but more about the social and artistic individuals we have become or are becoming in the intersected spheres of Chinese and Canadian.

The new Chinese shades, textures and tonalities created through our diverse choreographic texts leave the frequent question of “dancing a ‘Canadian’ belonging.” Other than quoting pre-existing Canadian indigenous dance cultures, or Canadian developed ballet and contemporary dance works of Euro-American origins as historic or ethno-geographic examples, the overall answer to this question is quite “open.” On grounds of Canada as a migrant nation of multicultural features, the possibility of a Canadian dance representation is vast and unending. From early European to recent Eastern and Western migrated cultures of diverse ethnic backgrounds, invisible (hereditary or psychological) and visible (visibly identifiable and conscious) hyphens inserted between cultures continue to inspire and process the dance *routes* of Canadian dance artists from different social and cultural sectors. I postulate that the Chinese-Canadian-ness as expressed in Wang’s and my choreographies belongs to those endless possibilities and variations produced along the hyphen – a Canadian third-space of historical and artistic linkages, native and diasporic connections, as well as global and local interpenetrations that institute our ever transforming Chinese-ness. This iconic space between Chinese and Canadian, if I may proclaim, suggests our current state of “partial” Canadian belonging, perhaps more aptly our Canadian “becoming” as dance artists of Chinese antecedent – a fluid diasporic identity yet and continued to be discovered.

## Chapter 4

### Epilogue: the Next Steps, the Final Questions

Lin Hwai-min: “Let Taiwan be brought to the world, and let the world be brought into Taiwan” (Cloud Gate Dance Theatre In-house Lecture, 9/11/2017).

Wen Wei Wang: “Now I see how rich my (Chinese) culture was and how much I learned. Why follow something that’s already been done in the West rather than dig deep inside myself to create something new” (Smith, Straight.com interview, web, 2/11/2015).

Yuri Ng: “Instilment of ideas and questions fosters dance and other artistic possibilities through generations” (Quah 2012, 25).

Elena Quah: “Writing dance and related stories of self and Others is my alternate dance space” (Self note, 10/30/2017).

Pertinent to my previous dance discourses on Chinese diasporic identities as a process of (re) negotiated *roots* and *routes* through histories, cultures, and places, I concur that the identities examined are not so much about where one is from, but where one is “at.” In concluding my dissertation project, tracing where the featured choreographers are “at” and raising timely project questions become a necessary and responsible direction for my writing. A compendious survey of the choreographers’ latest artistic and educational practices maintains the phenomenon of place-constituted third space(s) as pivotal for the individual artists’ current and future developments. The researched choreographic cases of different placial and geopolitical backgrounds continue to manifest, via subtle or vocal embodiments, the instigative capacity of the third/culturally in-between space as a critical dance forum emerging amid similar and different cultural texts, and between global and local artistic-political-economic attributes. In all



cases, the placial specificities and integral third-space elicitations remain the core choreographic agency and creative perpetration of cultural identity building in the rapidly changing social and artistic conditions of the Chinese diasporas of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Toronto, and Vancouver.

“Thank you Taiwan” was Lin Hwai-min’s first utterance when given the United States Dance Festival Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013. It was a momentous declaration of his native place as the cultural and artistic source of this prestigious achievement for the first Asian contemporary dance artist ever. Obviously, Lin’s localization of his Chinese cultural-artistic heritage, Western (modern) dance influences, and indigenous tribal cultural materials constituting an unparalleled Taiwanese-ness sets the cornerstone of his exceptional dance career. It is the Taiwanese character evoked from interfusing these materials in founding his choreographic theories and movements, moreover, that captures the raving attention of international viewers and dance critics.

Until now, Lin has lived his words of using dance to connect Taiwan with the world, and the world with Taiwan. Ancestral diasporic struggles, Chinese political plights, and socio-communal aspirations representative of Taiwan and its people repeatedly prompt his choreographic message to the world about Taiwan’s cultural and political stance. It is a message that demonstrates, at length, a persistent local drive in stirring global awareness and acknowledgement of Taiwanese cultural and artistic distinctness from the mainland Chinese ancestral political-ideological regime. *Formosa*,<sup>88</sup> Lin’s most recent and pre-retirement<sup>89</sup> choreography in 2017, re-emphasizes the diasporic and placial essences of Taiwan in an

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<sup>88</sup> Formosa is the Portuguese word for “beautiful.” In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Portuguese sailors sailing the South China Sea spotted the coast of a verdant island and exclaimed: “Formosa!” (Beautiful!) The word came to be known as the former name of the island of Taiwan (Cloudgate.org, web, 2017).

<sup>89</sup> Lin Hwai-min, age 70, Founder of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan in 1973, will retire from his current position as the company’s Artistic Director at the end of 2019. Cheung Tsung-lung, Artistic Director of **Cloud Gate 2**, will succeed him to direct Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (Cloudgate 2.org, web, 11/22/2017).

introductory excerpt from Taiwanese contemporary writers: “My island – on the map as it appears ... some say it shapes like a leaf floating along Asian Pacific coasts, some say it shapes like a yam that, for ages, sustains the lives of more than 230,000 inhabitants. I like this simile, also that of the leaf ...” (Translated from *Formosa* program notes, 11/24 – 12/24, 2017; *Formosa* YouTube trailer, web, 5/26/2017).

The new work about Taiwan’s earthly beauty and rustic inspirations – its antitheses of lived harmony and conflicts, of despair and hope, is interpreted by Cloud Gate contemporary physicality, a semiotic backdrop of interlocked Chinese scripts, and Taiwanese music and indigenous lyrics. Consistent with Lin’s previous works as studied, this piece re-presents a performed third space that intersects Chinese placial and Other cultural traits in forging the Taiwan of today. It also echoes his earlier works’ glocalized implications through an extensive scale of co-production staging with local and international presenters – a list covering The National Performing Arts Centre in Taipei and The National Kaohsiung Centre for the Arts in Wewuying, Taiwan (PRC); Sadler’s Wells, London, UK; Theatre de la Ville, Paris, France; Movimentos Festwochen der Autostadt in Wolfsburg, Germany; and Carolina Performing Arts, University of Northern Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA (*Formosa* program notes, 2017).

The repertory dissemination of *Formosa* reminds me of the glocalized self-identifying message of *Legacy* (1978), which Lin, upon local staging commendations and community endorsements, acquired global recognition through remounting the production in prestigious performance venues and teaching it to educational institutions overseas via internationally recognized Labanotation. To me, *Formosa*’s trans-glocal production package reflecting Lin’s co-presentation with the above Euro-American members of the United Nations (UN) is cultural-politically strategic. Flashing back to the epoch of *Legacy*’s Taiwanese premiere in 1978, when

the United Nations revoked Taiwan's UN membership by accepting China as the "one and only" Chinese sovereign member, I consider Lin's effort in securing a co-production staging space with these major UN members as strategically critical. It translates simply as his (dance) assertion of a Taiwanese (placial-artistic) status recognized and supported by globally influential affiliates with the United Nations. Thirty-nine years after the production of *Legacy*, Lin's flame in internationalizing the legacy of Taiwan (that it is worth a "place" in the world) proves inextinguishable. *Formosa* is just another of his profound enforcement of cultural and dialogic connections engendered in a third space between an intrinsic local Taiwanese consciousness and an extrinsic global viewing politics. The collaborative Taiwanese and international arts presenters that Lin engages in delivering his "beautiful island" are, conceptually and performatively, a choreographic move that continues to intercross Taiwan's local history and socio-politics with global arts-and-cultural promotion and education.

In Vancouver, Wen Wei Wang's seemingly inexorable Westernization with his Western movement-Canadian cosmopolitanist interpretations of Chinese traditional experiences harnesses an episodic reversion to the rooted Chinese self. Wang's intuitive recognition of a "deepened" (cf. p. 135) Chinese cultural expression after a choreographic series designed for Canadian and global reception, I think, might have ignited his dancing with Chinese artistic counterparts about innate Chinese feelings as diasporic Chinese. *Made in China* (2015), staged in major Canadian cities including Halifax, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver, exemplifies this attempted choreographic change (for Chinese depth) in Wang. It denotes Wang's new dance possibility through his personal translation of an "honest" (Meyers, Vancouver Sun, interview, web, 2/16/2015), natural inner being: the "Chinese" in him – a self that is reflected by other Chinese selves, as danced and performed through Wang's collaborations with fellow artists of the same

mainland Chinese origin – Gao Yanjinxi (Artistic Director, Beijing Modern Dance Company) and Qui Xia He (pipa/Chinese lute specialist, Vancouver Silk Road Music), along with Taiwan-born Sammy Chien (Vancouver sound-video designer). Adhering to a Western and global lens in concept and context, Wang engages forthrightly his repertory title as a thematic discourse. Citing “Made in China” as a global trademark connoting cheap and mass productions, Wang argues against this presumption with his collaborators of Chinese origin that the work they produce together can be something deeply experiential and creatively meaningful.

Wang’s changing approach is significant, as it utilizes Western and global views to define what “Chinese” really means to him as an adolescent and adult – a turnaround from his past works that employed local Chinese cultural icons and social features to develop Western and global crowd pleasers. Born amid poverty and deprivation of free and individual expressions marking the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s,<sup>90</sup> Wang shares his personal experience and feelings of the time through a Western structured improvisation with the international icons of Chinese chopsticks and silk fans. In using live *pipa* (Chinese lute) and onstage electronic musical sound mixtures to dialogue with movements, Wang articulates his Chinese stories through a hybrid dance-music performative of the traditional and contemporary.

Invoking past Chinese hardships and present diasporic struggles, the oversize chopsticks used in Wang’s explorative solo simulates hunger (for food in old China) and a hungry urge (for

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<sup>90</sup> The Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was a movement under Chinese communist leader/chairman Mao Tse-tung in acquiring social and political power over China via violent class struggles (between the working and upper/elite classes). Its goal was to preserve the communist ideology in China by purging capitalist remnants and traditional elements while imposing “Mao thoughts” as a guiding theory for the Chinese Communist Party. China’s youths responded to Mao’s appeal and formed the Red Army to carry out widespread movement activities. Identifying landlords, rich farmers, intellectuals, and the West as enemies, the movement led to extensive destructions of the old Chinese culture and values, seizure of private properties, public humiliation, imprisonments, tortures and death across the country. The movement reasserted Mao’s principle of using art and literature as a revolutionary weapon for destroying the enemies and uniting the people, of discarding individual rights and free expressions and working toward a common stratum of benefitting the Party or promoting the Mao policy. After Mao’s death in 1976, the revolution came to an end and was acknowledged by the Party as a historic event that triggered the most severe national setbacks and damages socially and politically since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (Yang 1971, 258-261; Under Mao – the Cultural Revolution, web, 2013).

self-expression in the contemporary West). His mouth-clenched, fully open fan masking the whole face in a duet (with Gao) arouses an uneasy and somewhat disturbing feeling of a faceless individual – my interpretive association with a Chinese cultural revolutionized selflessness, and of a restless, anxious (migrant-artist) self straddling native Chinese-ness and adopted Canadian-ness. Looming over Wang’s dance stage is hence another event of the third space (sensed) between the original Chinese and acquired diasporic cultures, yet one revitalized with an unprecedented self-reflexivity that connects local (Chinese) authentic emotions with global (Canadian and Other) aesthetic cognizance. Wang’s wreath of cultural and artistic identities processed in a shared third space with Chinese artistic collaborators in this later work, as I note, presents the most organic and candid Chinese-Canadian negotiation among all his other works under examination. It prompts my desire to see more of this development – a potentially touching expression derived from his Chinese and Western experiential and dance blended-ness.

In Hong Kong, Yuri Ng’s creative changes and new possibilities are persistently vibrant in his multidisciplinary engagements. Stressing that artistic creations are not just about the form or the practice, but much about the lived and living (Ng, Hong Kong Dance Alliance, YouTube interview, web, 4/16/2013), Ng is able to transcend his formal ballet training to create new and unique works with his artistic sensibilities and any corporeal or psychical material given or learnt from his immediate environment(s) – in particular the “place” of Hong Kong that he emphasizes as a choreographic home base. With Ng, a change or new possibility is not limited to new or debuting works, it also applies to remounts or old productions. *Boy Story*, the piece Ng created for the Hong Kong City Contemporary Dance Theatre (CCDT) in 1996 and awarded Prix D’auteur (Choreographic Award) from the International Choreographic Meetings of Seine-Saint-Denis (Bagnole) in France in 1998, had its most recent remount with 5 of the 6 male dancers

from the original cast at the 2017 Kuala Lumpur International Arts Festival in Malaysia. Apart from its Malaysian restaging, the work has been danced by different Hong Kong companies including Hong Kong Ballet, Unlock Dancing Plaza, and re-created for different generations of dancers of varied disciplines. Despite a highly structured and invincible ballet training background, Ng's belief in artistic inclusion and choreographic fluidity has realized unceasing possibilities for the old production through the different forms and performers in place for its later versions. *Boy Story* performed to date is an epitome of such.

A new addition, a new audience, a new performance site with the same timely message is what I perceive of the *Boy Story* remount, or “re-creation” – my preferred term because of the new energies and revived meanings instilled in the recently re-presented Hong Kong choreographic icon of 21 years. Ng's first native choreography in 1996 after his Canadian repatriation, the work is essentially a third-space product. I recognize in it a biographic stature corresponding to Ng's existential in-between-ness – a complicated feeling cultivated between his long accustomed Western democracy of Hong Kong and the longstanding governing approach of the Chinese totalitarian motherland. Choreographed just a year before British colonial Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, the work brings onstage a replication of the Hong Kong countdown clock<sup>91</sup> installed at Beijing's Tiananmen Square in signifying the pressing anxiety (by minutes and seconds) over the historical moment of mainland China's takeover of Hong Kong. Presented with their own creative voices, the six dancers – a living symbol of self-doubt and male gender attitude toward the critical 21<sup>st</sup> century East-West national-political

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<sup>91</sup> The Hong Kong countdown clock at Beijing's Tiananmen Square operated from December 19, 1994 to June 30, 1997 – the day before Hong Kong's official return to China on July 1, 1997. A colossal electric and digital device set up in front of the museum building, it literally showed the countdown time (in days, minutes, and seconds) of the historical return. It represents a new era of public time-telling and political space-indication in Chinese history (Wu 1997, 329-354; Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture, web, 2017).

transaction, are contextually repositioned as individual dream pursuers at a time-space of personal uncertainties and social confusion.

For more than two decades, in a third space between his diasporic Canadian and native Hong Kong homelands, Ng has resolved disciplinary differences and corporeal challenges though the different dance bodies of *Boy Story*. Located in between his barely departed Canadian and newly readapted Hong Kong habitats when launching the choreography, Ng saw a coincidental connectedness with the original CCDT cast of Malaysian Chinese origin, who were also placially in-between artists living the median of their acquired (Hong Kong) and native (Malaysian) home grounds. The bodily motif of soldier-like gestures conveying a voluntary order of being away from home and in between the native and adopted lands to the classic English folk song *Five Hundred Miles*,<sup>92</sup> or the strenuous ballet barre techniques exercised to the Hong Kong Cantonese pop song *Self-assumed Male Strength* (translated from Chinese),<sup>93</sup> both render a visual-aural projection of the third space binding Western balletic-gymnastic and Hong Kong-popularized lyrical texts. A globalized dance dissemination of a Hong Kong socio-political quandary and associative male aspirations by various performing groups in Hong Kong and France (CCDT), Japan (Hong Kong Ballet), Taiwan and Malaysia (Unlock Dancing Plaza), the piece further showcases a third-space and glocal theatre enabling global (receptive) and local (social) interactions.

With an added introductory documentary by Hong Kong film director Maurice Lai (Murugappan, Star 2.com. Preview, 8/312017, web) on the different generational casts and their

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<sup>92</sup> Written by American songwriter Hedy West and popularized by British singing duo *Peter & Gordon* during the 1960s, the song became a favourable hit for the younger British colonial Hong Kong generation (inclusive of Ng) born and growing up in that era.

<sup>93</sup> A Cantonese pop song icon originally composed as a theme song for a televised Hong Kong Chinese drama series in the 1980s. The song was still popular to local ears during Ng's Hong Kong repatriation in the 1990s.

enthusiastic enactments of Ng's concept, the latest 2017 Kuala Lumpur premiere of *Boy Story* proves a timeless piece that perpetuates local Hong Kong concerns as it legitimizes Ng's acute anxiety (as a repatriated citizen) over eventual Chinese totalitarian infiltration in Hong Kong. Choreographically implied and artistically prophetic, Ng's personal anxiety framing *Boy Story* as suggested by the Tiananmen countdown clock is well grounded with the occurrence of The Umbrella Revolution<sup>94</sup> in Hong Kong in 2014. The months-long street demonstrations of civil resistance to mainland China's intervention of the city's universal electoral suffrage and judicial participation, years after Ng's 1996 *Boy Story* creation, reconfirms Ng's choreographic foresight of a worrisome Hong Kong situation. The recent *Boy Story* remount proves apt and applicable in conveying that same situation – a third-space cultural-political ethos (still) trapped and struggling between Western democratic residues and augmenting Chinese communist control.

In Toronto, other than dancing/choreographing in the third space between my ancestral Chinese and diverse Canadian cultures, I see myself as an alternate dance participant in a new, different space – my reinterpretation of a “personal” third space between “dance” and “writing.” After a series of dance creations and collaborations for the dance stage, I have embarked on a spontaneous dance move onto the scholarly stage. For educational and artistic purposes, the latter stage helps fulfill the self-urge of going through an internal synthesis in understanding my and Others' corporeal inscriptions, and in articulating the dance art worthy of a tangible written record of its intangibly performed aesthetics. Pursuing graduate studies in dance becomes my next and immediate step in fathoming more fully the impetuses of my own and the others'

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<sup>94</sup> Occurring from September 26 to December 15, 2014, the massive camped demonstrations and mobile protestations in Hong Kong's central and other districts including Admiralty, Causeway Bay and MongKok witnessed over 100,000 participants at peak at any given time. The movement was instigated by Hong Kong's influential student and intellectual bodies against Beijing's proposed reforms to the city's electoral system – a decision perceived as highly restrictive and commensurate to the Chinese Communist Party's pre-screening of candidates for the leader of Hong Kong (Kaiman 2015, *The Guardian*, web; Cheung 2014, *South China Morning Post*, web). Heated protestors were typically dispersed by tear gas or pepper sprays operated by local police forces on various protest sites. The event was named after reporting images of wide open umbrellas used by protesters for protection from the police's tear-gas and pepper-spray applications (Iyengar 2014, *Time*, web).



creative minds and dance bodies. A different step taken yet closely relevant to those of my case counterparts, it offers me the constructive chance of looking deeper and broader as both an immersed and detached case observer – away from the dance performance space and via my writing space. If Lin professes that his *Cursive Trilogy* is a way of using the dance bodies to deliver the philosophical depth of Chinese calligraphy onstage, I count my present endeavour as using my dance pen to present the surveyed cases' social and intellectual spirits that could be receptively missed or generalized through different cultural or individual viewing experiences offstage.

I consider the endeavour a constructive step as it continues the connection of my dance life with my case counterparts in an unexpectedly comprehensive and meaningful spectrum. As a young adolescent in Hong Kong without any dance concept or experience, I was caught by Lin Hwai-min's remark from reading his book written during the Cloud Gate hiatus – that a couple of his dancers used their free time for Taiwanese opera training. The thought that dance could be as flexible and inclusive stirred my initial interest in the form. Anything that Mr. Lin does with his revived dance company afterwards, I accede, has been consciously or subconsciously influential in shaping my dancer-choreographer practice and visions. Knowing Yuri Ng as a young dancer with The National Ballet of Canada (NBOC) through a Chinese dance-instructor friend after my immigration to Toronto was equally unforgettable. It was a meet-up at the library prior to our attending an NBOC performance, where I saw Ng browsing through the Philosophy shelves for “possible” *Swan Lake* relevant titles in preparing for his choreographic debut of *Ordette's Ordeal* (cf. pp. 33-34). The creative-philosophical mix in Ng drew my intuitive thought of “a special dancer” that I could hardly elaborate with words at the time – not until I started to think and write about his works in my doctoral studies.

Wen Wei Wang first caught my attention in a Toronto television program featuring artistic practices and events across Canadian cities. It was maybe a 2-minute clip of his freely swerving motions under the coaching of the late Canadian balletic-contemporary dance master Grant Strate<sup>95</sup> in a Vancouver residential garden. The scene inspired my sense of a sophisticatedly variant dance direction of Wang as a Canadian immigrant from China, especially after learning of his foremost professional Chinese traditional dance training. Noting Wang's dance developments could mean "something else" and "somewhere beyond," I felt an instant urge to follow "what" may come out from this artist braving cultural and dance differences in the Western diasporic and diverse "openness" of Canada. Having inserted self-reflections through integrating my own works as a case participant and informant, I feel as though I were constantly dancing into and out of the choreographic gist of these affecting artistic counterparts to share my findings in a writing space surpassing physical and technical hurdles. In this capacity, my newly traversed space constitutes a new third space located between "performed" dancing and writing in the sphere of artistic philosophy. It enables the merging of the *dancer* and *writer* selves in me as "a hybrid agency" that is unhindered by geographic, environmental, and cultural discrepancies, assembling as it concretizes dance implications and significances of the comparative cases in review.

With a similar third-space stance between my Chinese heritage and diasporic Western impacts, I can empathize with the other choreographic cases' identity complexities, placial-social causes, and movement impetuses. Dancing and choreographing between and often mixing my British colonial Hong Kong, ancestral Chinese, and Canadian migrant selves as one, I can see

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<sup>95</sup> Founding Chair of the Department of Dance at York University in Toronto (1970-80) and Director for the School of Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver (1980-89), the late Mr. Strate had been one of the most influential dance educators, choreographers and dance administrators in Canada. Recipient of the Order of Canada and Governor General's Performing Arts award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement, Strate had been Wen Wei Wang's mentor and role model since Wang's immigration from China to Vancouver in the 1980s (Grant Strate - bibliography, Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Foundation, web, 2018).

why the persistent Hong Kong and Taiwanese distinctness in Ng's and Lin's works in the East, and imagine what actually drives Wang's Canadian contemporary dance repertoires versus my Chinese traditional dance re-creations in the West. As examined and defined in the preceding chapters, our respective dance conditions and creations are primarily geopolitically and socio-culturally constructed. In this compass, I note that the closer the diasporic geography to the Chinese ancestral land and the more Chinese descendants in that area, as with Hong Kong and Taiwan, the more *rooted* notions and materials are used in the dances created. Paradoxically, the farther the diasporic geography from the Chinese ancestral land and the lesser the Chinese populations, as with Canada, the more *routed* practices and strategies are contrived in choreographic developments.

In my interpretive assessment, Ng's and Lin's choreographic voices in the diasporic East specifying Hong Kong and Taiwanese identities suggest a deep-seated anxiety related to the nearby Chinese communist motherland's reclaiming eventual and full control over existing Hong Kong and Taiwan capitalist-democratic systems. In amplifying historic-culturally mixed or pluralistic Hong Kongese and Taiwanese over essential (mainland) Chinese *roots*, their works reflect the artistic and psychological counteractions to the same pending anxiety, as well as a common underlying statement that the two places now "own" their unique positions as Chinese societies deemed culturally and politically disparate from, and hence unassimilable with the Chinese ancestral regime. Over in the diasporic West, Wang's and my Canadian dance *routes* indicative of Vancouver- and Toronto-based migrated Chinese-ness collaborate or integrate with Other and Western heritages as a Canadian mosaic-minority culture. These *routes* distinguish or implicate the "Chinese" ancestral origin composing a part of Canadian-ness – as observed in Wang's and my acknowledgements of our Chinese-Canadian identity civically and

choreographically. Fully aware of our diasporic living in places of nationally mandated multicultural receptivity – in the adoptive Canadian societies of expressive freedoms, the genealogical term of “Chinese” poses no potential political nor psychological threats in Wang and me. In fact, it contributes the major thread and creative pulse in our works – in my engagement of a Chinese traditional dance base to connect with Other Toronto mosaic cultures and art forms, and in Wang’s strategic presentations of Chinese sociality and cultural icons with balletic-contemporary dance texts to gain Western and global attentions.

The selected works of my study showcase the cultural and artistic assembly of the East and West, and all translation, interpretation, negotiation, and (re) appropriation involved for Chinese identity reconstructions and dance re-imaginings in the situated diasporas. These processes are critical to creating the “future” of any dance artist of Chinese descent, wherever and whenever they instigate or contribute new and reinvented sources to their lived places and dance milieus. Reverting to the vast and complex inquiry at a Toronto performance venue on the future of Chinese diasporic dance artists (cf. p. 1), I can catch a glimpse of the future-making possibilities through the comparative cases assessed. Drawing from the examined Chinese diasporic choreographies and their identity implications of Eastern and Western geographic originations, I perceive this “future” as constructed in the ever evolving and fluid third space between local Chinese (ancestral or native) and global cultures, economies and politics. It remains a phenomenon constantly conjured between East-West social instigations and cross-cultural creativities, and continually shaped between past-present artistic traditions and efforts in such vibrant diasporic habitats as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Toronto, and Vancouver.

Lin’s inauguration of Cloud Gate 2 since 1999 (as a sister company of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre) with a new generation of choreographers and dancers in perpetuating “Taiwan-

spawned” dance aspirations and movement philosophy worldwide, and Ng’s signature works passed on to various dance companies in and beyond Hong Kong with an astute historic-placial education “about Hong Kong” for international viewers, in my estimation, are evidences of a constructive future that signifies “the making” of an authenticated Chinese diasporic dance language of Taiwan and Hong Kong uniqueness. In rethinking my present preoccupation with Chinese diasporic dance writing as an alternate dance space, I see a new means to keep my dance passion alive and meaningful in (literarily) exploring the dance and related fields for present and future viewings/readership. As a Chinese-Canadian dance artist participating and working in the same diaspora setting, I maintain a keen interest in observing Wang’s choreographic developments as he continues his quest for the “deeper and truest” self. If fulfilled, it might cultivate a dance style of character in the third space between Chinese and Canadian cultures, and fundamentally between local socio-political and global receptive conditions. By virtue of Wang’s dance calibre and strategic proficiency, I trust that there are unlimited chances for him to mould a personalized Chinese diasporic dance dictum in precipitating a cultural-artistic re-visioning of “Canadian” dance, which is still a debatable and contested categorization – given Canada’s national history of migrated heritages and imported dance forms from other parts of the world.

Finally, I avow that locating and feeling a sense of diasporic identity often depends on the play of “places” and all the cultural, social, and individual actions or struggles from within. In this respect, the Ng and Lin cases manifest the agency of an Eastern diaspora by birth, where their dance creations are closely nourished by (mainland) Chinese ancestral *roots* from across a narrow South China Strait, and where their third space between varying Chinese-ness of Hong Kong and China, likewise Taiwan and China, virtually operates and evolves from a *cultural*

*sameness* among the Hong Kong and Taiwan inhabitants. Native to the Chinese predominant diasporic homelands of Hong Kong and Taiwan, Ng and Lin create works that feature more strongly a placial-Chinese awakening of geopolitical differentiation and less intense a cultural negotiation with Others. Immersed in place-based ideas and materials, both manage to maintain a (re) appropriated Chinese-ness of Hong Kong and Taiwanese “belonging.” It is basically this placial belongingness that enables the development and assertion of a validated Chinese diasporic dance language of Hong Kong and Taiwan emblems in Ng’s and Lin’s repertoires.

Conversely in Canada, Wang’s and my choreographic endeavours in a Western diaspora by choice (of migration) occur in a third space redolent of East-West *cultural differences*. The interactive mingling or integrative collaborations between our ancestral Chinese, Canadian mainstream and Other migrant cultures entail relatively complex choreographic *routes* and dialogues. The scenario renders much more intensive artistically negotiated and interpolative expressions in filling and/or suturing the cultural knowledge and creative gaps between our Chinese and Western-Other heritages that compose the diverse Toronto and Vancouver cosmopolitan settings. Its transmission of mixed cultural nuances and in-between-ness inspires my perception of a permanent Chinese affiliation with multicultural Canada, where diasporic belongingness is yet an aspired imaginary to cultivate or realize through our Canadian dance occupations. Unlike the works of Ng and Lin that suggest a definitive Hong Kong-ness and Taiwanese-ness, my works in Toronto and Wang’s in Vancouver transpire, for now, a Canadian minority affinity – the hyphenated status of original Chinese-ness and acquired Canadian-ness. The identity of Chinese-Canadian implicating dual or more cultural consciousness and self-positions as manifest in our choreographic productions relates, alternatively, a place-mobilized

diasporic dance vocabulary in (reimagined) construction between Chinese and Canadian cultural-artistic borders.

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with “newness” that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent “in-between” space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present (Bhabha, 10).

That “newness” – the art of a contingent third/in-between space as indicated by Bhabha is integral to my dance discourse of geopolitical plays and socio-cultural responses. Chinese-ness as a moving concept (Gerdes 2013, 386) is fluidly constructive as it is contentious in the third space. The third-space effects of cultural and glocal in-between-ness – and any relevant innovation or interruption in dance, are not confined to Chinese scattered to various diasporas, but evident in different cultures and places of colonial, post-colonial, and diasporic experiences. Brazil-ness reviewed as an anthropological process of ingesting foreign impositions in producing a latent synthesis of Portuguese colonial and post-colonial elements in the hybridized contemporary Brazilian dance bodies and Brazilian-Canadian choreographies (Dantas 2011, 342)<sup>96</sup> attests to an artistic transformation by global Euro colonialism and local native responses. Meanwhile, Filipino ballet repertory icon *Igorot* (cf. p. 38-39) characterized by a local assimilation of Euro-American balletic and Filipino folk cultures creates a hybridized “Filipino-ness” (Ness, 66) of American colonial and transnational features to global receptiveness. Bollywood film dance, in securing local Indian popularity and global reception, integrates

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<sup>96</sup> An analysis of the social and political implications of contemporary Brazilian dance bodies on native and diasporic soils based on anthropologist Oswald de Andrade’s *Anthropophagite Manifesto* of 1928.

Western dance and musical styles with Indian dance vocabularies in reinforcing “Indian” social values – a glocalised “compromise between Westernization and India” for commercial success (Rao 2010, 1-2). Echoing these examples of foreign or external impacts and domestic or diasporic responses and (re) creations, Chinese-ness choreographed in diasporas suggests “one” of many culture-specific concepts and situations that contains and rightfully disseminates the culturally intermixed and glocally co-produced histories and politics of “what,” “where,” and the alchemy of “who” – as reflected in my case studies of East-West dance confluences and identity reinventions in the third space of historic-cultural mediations.

Probing the danced third space as instrumental in Chinese diasporic identity reconstructions through my comparative case studies, I observe a common trail of cultural-artistic gains and losses. Lin or Ng in the Eastern diasporas of Hong Kong and Taiwan develop an exclusive placial signature of their dance artistries, though not without difficult antecedent political displacements from the Chinese mother nation. Wang and I in the Western diaspora of Canada discover new social chances and creative possibilities in forfeiting or leaving our original home grounds of mainland China and (British colonial) Hong Kong. Both sets of experiences are subjected to the ongoing attributions of socio-political disparities yet cultural and artistic reimaginings in a predominant third space between the East and the West – the constitutive site of Hong Kongese, Taiwanese, and Chinese-Canadian distinctions from the generic and universalized labeling of “Chinese.”

The examined works illuminate a choreographic trail of identity struggles and validations amid Chinese and Other cultures under global-local affects. As third-space creative products, they provoke my ultimate dance questions of Chinese diasporic identity reinventions and cultural sustenance. Will diasporic dance creations develop their own unique streams of “placial



authenticity” via cultural transformations and artistic changes? Will local Chinese cultural characteristics and artistic depth survive the global waves of cultural and political economies, or will global geopolitics assume authorship in Chinese diasporic dance making with the eventual sacrifice of identity intactness and artistic integrity? Bearing in mind the case studies just discussed, I believe it is all a question of “pending” – places, individuals, and social calls.

Admittedly, the choreographic works of my research and congruous place-time factors inspire an extensive inquiry spanning historical, contemporaneous, and future dance implications. Instead of keeping that all-in-one question for my solitary artistic-intellectual reflections, I am inclined to share it for the conscientious consideration of dance artists-creators in participation, and for the conscious contemplation of both local and global audiences playing a major influential role in this predicament.

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**Figure 1:** *Firecracker* (2011)

Choreographer: Yuri Ng

Performed by: The Hong Kong Ballet Company





**Figure 2-A**

*still dancing* (2007): Victor Ma, Kam Tin Clinic, Yuen Long, New Territories

Photo Choreographer: Yuri Ng



The back garden of Kam Tin Clinic in Yuen Long (元朗錦田診所), previously known in Chinese as "錦田婦孺醫院", built in 1963.

**Figure 2-B**

*still dancing* (2007): Helen Lai, Lomond Road Garden Pathway, Kowloon

Photo Choreographer: Yuri Ng



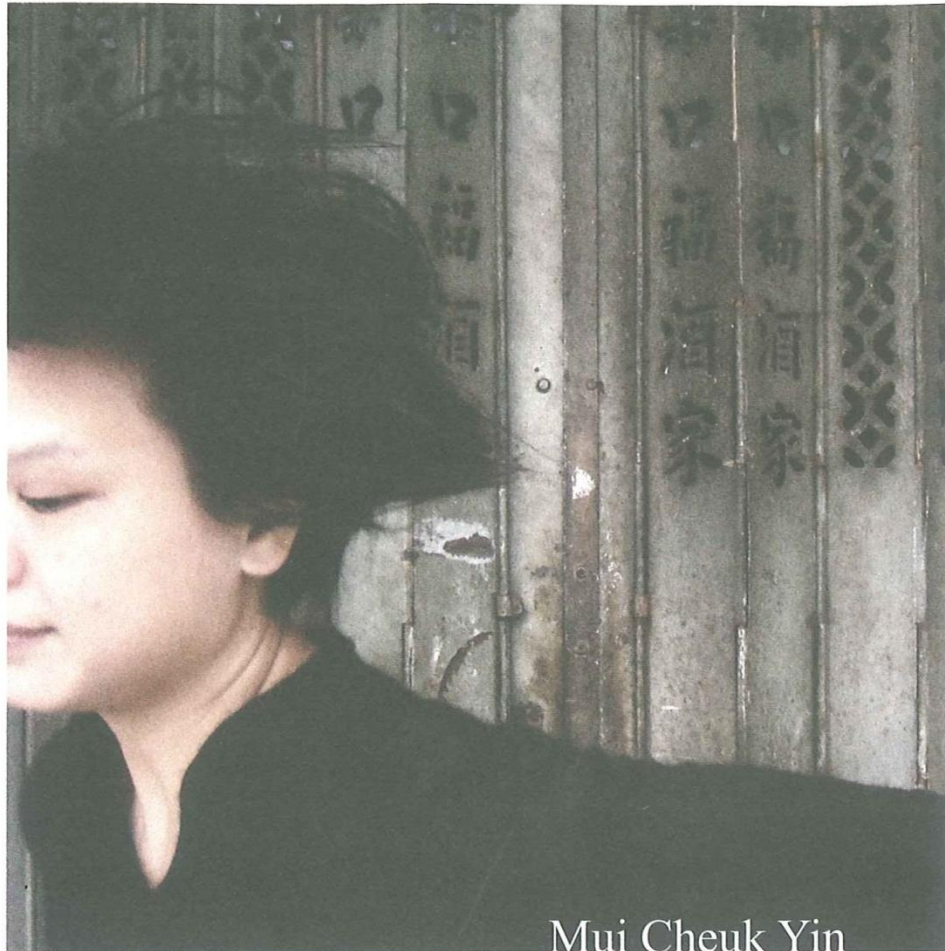
黎海寧

Somewhere between Lomond Road Garden (露明道公園), built in 1962, and Maryknoll Convent School (瑪利諾修院學校), Helen's Alma mater.

**Figure 2-C**

*still dancing* (2007): Mui Cheuk-yin, Lok Hau Fook Restaurant, Kowloon City

Photo Choreographer: Yuri Ng



梅卓燕

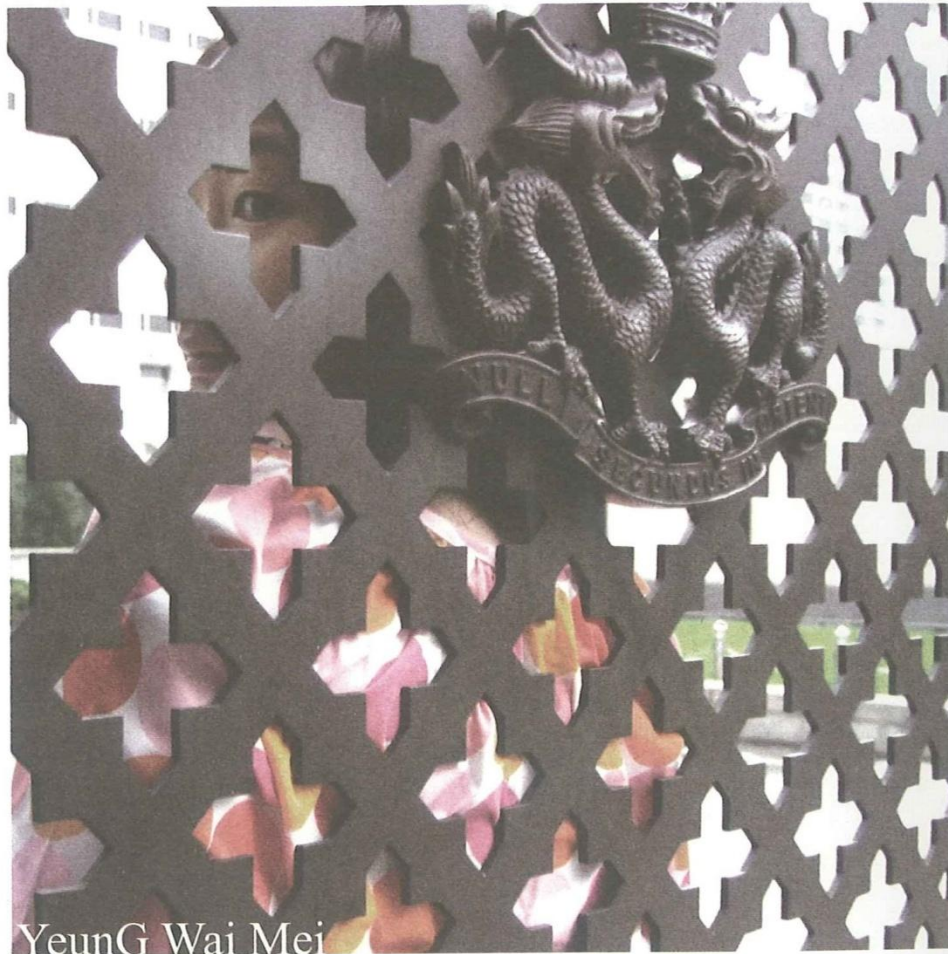
In front of Lok Hau Fook Restaurant(樂口福酒家)(established in 1954) in Kowloon City.



**Figure 2-D**

*still dancing* (2007): Yeung Wai-mei, The City Hall Memorial Garden, Hong Kong

Photo Choreographer: Yuri Ng



YeunG Wai Mei

楊惠美

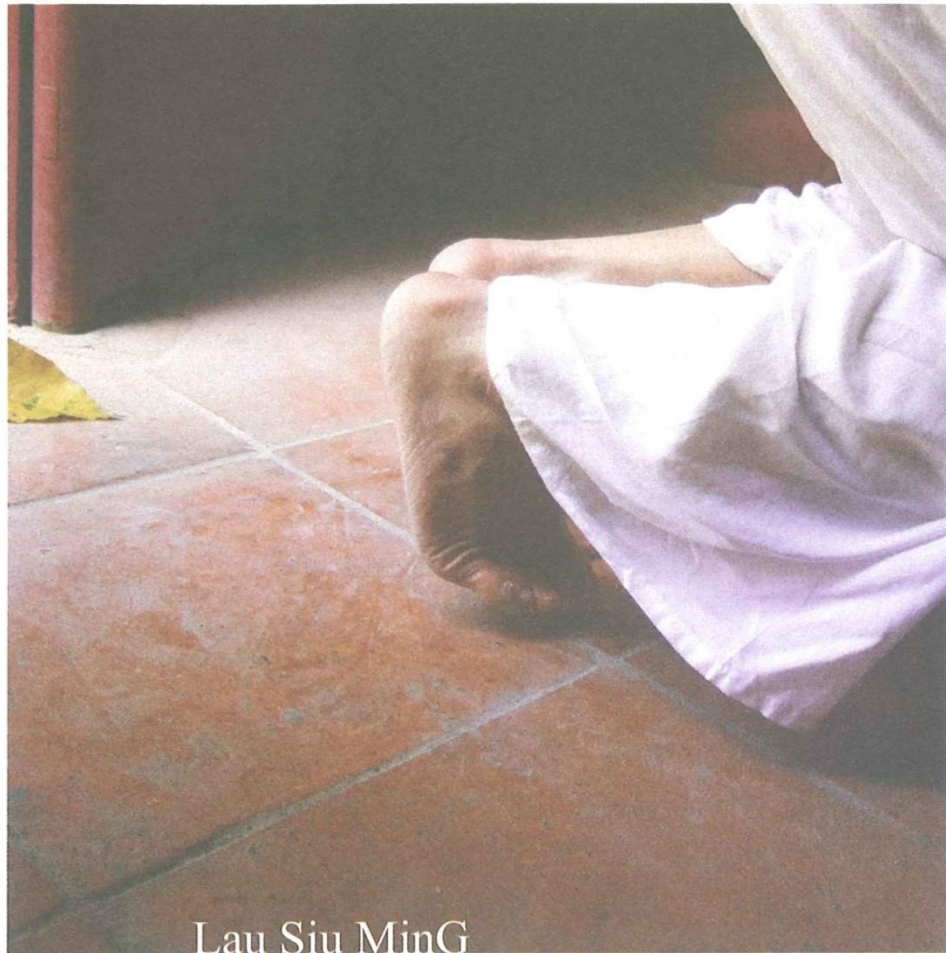
The City Hall Memorial Garden.(香港大會堂紀念公園)

"THESE GATES HAVE BEEN ERECTED IN MEMORY OF THOSE MEMBERS OF THE HONG KONG VOLUNTEER DEFENSE CORPS WHO DIED IN DEFENSE OF THE COLONY AND DURING THE PERIOD 1941-1945"

**Figure 2-E**

*still dancing* (2007): Lau Siu-ming, Tam Kung Tin Hau Temple, Happy Valley, Hong Kong

Photo Choreographer: Yuri Ng



Lau Siu Ming

劉兆銘

Wong Nai Chong Tam Kung Tin Hau Temple (黃泥涌譚公天后廟), built in 1901 on a small hill at the corner of Ventris Road and Blue Pool Road in Happy Valley.

**Figure 3:** *Legacy* (Spotting the New Land) (1978)

Choreographer-Artistic Director: Lin Hwai-min

Performed by: The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan



**Figure 4:** *Nine Songs (God of Clouds)* (1993)

Choreographer-Artistic Director: Lin Hwai-min

Performed by: The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan





**Figure 5:** *Cursive II/Pine Smoke* (Duet – intertwined Yin-Yang forces/the figure ‘8’) (2003)

Choreographer-Artistic Director: Lin Hwai-min

Performed by: The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan





**Figure 6: *Apart yet Together - a Chinese-Indian-Korean Dance Experience* (1998)**

Choreographers-Dancers: Mi-young Kim, Ruo-chun Nie, Lata Pada, Elena Quah



**Figure 7:** *Behind Silk Ribbons & Rebozos* (2001)

Choreographers-Dancers: Norma Araiza, Elena Quah



**Figure 8:** *Ending an Arabic Fable* (2008)

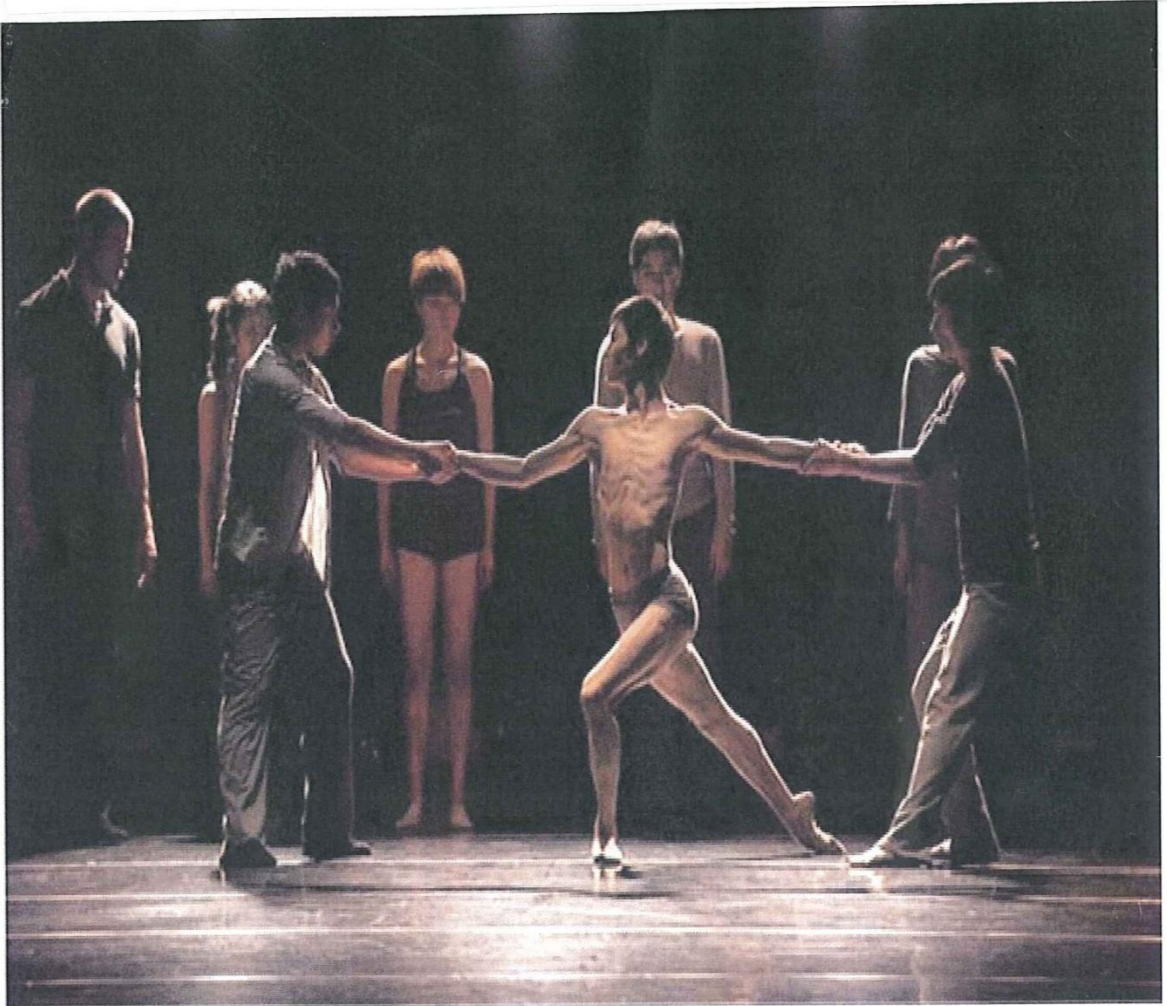
Choreographer-Dancer: Elena Quah



**Figure 9:** *In Transition/Under the Skin* (2012)

Choreographer: Wen Wei Wang

Performed by: Beijing Modern Dance Company (China); Wen Wei Dance, Vancouver (Canada)





**Figure 10:** *Unbound* (2006)

Choreographer: Wen Wei Wang

Performed by: Wen Wei Dance



**Figure 11:** *Cockpit* (2009)

Choreographer: Wen Wei Wang

Performed by: Wen Wei Dance

